

LA  
SECTION SANITAIRE  
ANGLAISE No. 10.

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# S. S. A. 10.

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## NOTES

On the Work of a British Volunteer Ambulance  
Convoy with the 2nd French Army (of Verdun).

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BY

WM. ST. Q. LENG, M.A., LL.B.

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ONE GUINEA.

SHEFFIELD:  
Sir W. C. Leng & Co., Ltd., High Street.  
—  
1918.

## AUTHOR'S APOLOGIA.

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These Notes are written from a personal point of view. They describe, so far as my modest literary talents allow, my own experiences only : it is difficult, if not impossible, to deal with other people's. If they have any merit it is that they reflect our moods and hopes and sometimes our despair from day to day.

1915



16<sup>e</sup> Corps d'Armée

31<sup>e</sup> Division



1917



Section Sanitaire  
Anglaise 10

Trevanca

La Châtelde

Sept Fontaines

Bras

Mort-Homme

Les Adieux

## ORDRE DE L'ARMÉE

Le General GUILLAUMAT, Commandant la 2<sup>e</sup> Armée,  
cite à l'Ordre de l'Armée

### La Section Sanitaire Anglaise 10

" Sous le commandement du Sous-Lieutenant KLINGELHÖFER, a  
" assuré depuis un an et demi, les évacuations dans les secteurs difficiles de  
" la manière la plus remarquable. Ses conducteurs pour la plupart âgés et  
" libérés de toute obligation militaire, viennent, au cours  
" d'une attaque récente, de faire l'admiration de tous  
" en parcourant, en plein jour des zones violemment  
" bombardées par l'ennemi et en assurant les évacuations  
" avec une rapidité non obtenue jusqu'à ce jour



Aux Armées, le 4 octobre 1917.

Le Général Commandant la 2<sup>e</sup> Armée.

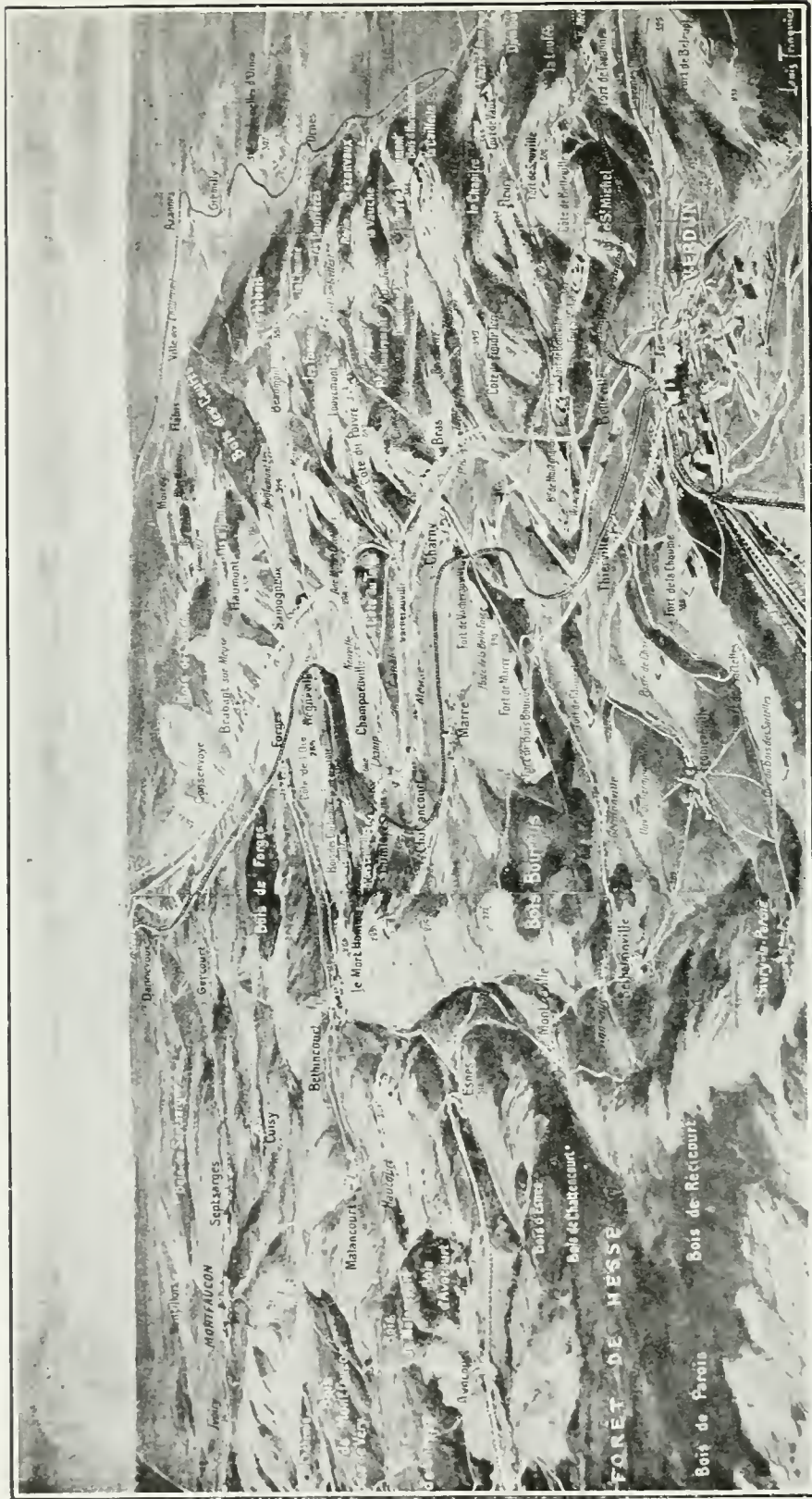
Signé GUILLAUMAT.

Le Sous-Lieutenant Commandant la S. S. Anglaise 10  
certifie que le conducteur *Leng S. Q. Williams*  
était présent à l'unité à cette date

Le Sous-Lieutenant Commandant,

*KLINGELHÖFER*





The Battle-ground of Verdun.



# LA SECTION SANITAIRE ANGLAISE

## No. 10.

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THE WINTER OF 1915.

### OUR INITIATION.

Somewhere in France, in the mud, always in the mud, mud which climbs to the knees, and requires a chisel to remove from the car, somewhere quite close to the front, is the Section Sanitaire Anglaise No. 10. Hidden under the trees in the grounds of a charming French chateau to escape the attention of the too inquisitive Taubes, are 15 ambulance cars. "Comité de Londres" is painted large on either side, and every car has its heating apparatus, worked from the exhaust, its fire extinguisher, its 50-litre spare tank of petrol, and its smaller tins of water and paraffin.

In little white letters on the side are marked the number of stretcher cases and sitters the car can carry, and the name and address of the owner-driver.

Fifteen Englishmen, either too old for military purposes or incapacitated on other grounds, constitute the section. Some of them are University men, two or three Colonials, several were motor experts before they came out, but now after six months' experience with cars that live in the open, day and night, in frost, rain, snow, or sunshine, and are occasionally half up to the axles in mud, cars that have to be started at five minutes' notice any hour of the twenty-four, they all know at least something.

It was in the autumn of 1915 that the first five or six assembled hurriedly, believing the determination of the war primarily depended upon their presence in Paris. A few weeks later another two or three came out. At last, after several months' waiting, the final three arrived, and all were sent off to Versailles to await their embodiment in the French Army. It was then they received their baptism of hard work. After running about with maps, route-finding, and trying to keep exactly 30 metres behind the car in front, and in front of the car behind—which is what all well-regulated

convoys should do, quite independently of the different normal speeds of the cars and the distressing fact that the man behind will drop back 100 yards, and spoil the symmetry of the whole affair)—the convoy was ordered out one night, or rather early one morning, at 1 a.m.

It was just after the big French affair in Champagne. The cars started off, some of the drivers without coats or gloves, for they did not know whether it was a matter of an hour or two or not, and the order was "Immediate."

First they went to a station at Versailles, where they were not wanted, and then to Paris. There, for nearly three successive days and nights without sleep, and with very little time to snatch a meal, they helped to distribute the wounded to the hospitals in and around Paris, and at last arrived back, very weary and tired, for a short rest—they were out again at 1 a.m. the next morning—feeling they had at last begun to do their bit.

#### AT 2½d. PER DAY.

Some of them in the early days, misled by a rosy-hued advertisement, believed they were to be treated as French officers. They had each provided a car and all the accessories, their regulation khaki and blue uniforms, quite pretty when clean, and found as time went on they were expected to provide practically everything except army rations, petrol and tyres, so they saw themselves in imagination with little gold stripes on their sleeves, with "a man" to do all the hard and dirty work of the car.

But war has many disillusiones, and one day it was plainly put to them that they must either go as French privates at ½d. a day, since raised to 2½d., or not at all. Alas, for the glories of the little gold stripes! But to their credit be it said, they one and all accepted. They have slept night after night in their cars, in damp cellars, on stretchers, in rat-infested lofts, they have eaten when they could and what they could. They have stolen damp firewood to dry their still damper sleeping-bags. They have worked night or day as the occasion required, with sick, wounded, and contagious cases, with or without lights. They have been stuck in the mud and hung up on the road, and have taken a malicious delight in towing each other home. They have got across with their *officier*, their *sous officier*, and the French regulations generally. They have marvelled at the French way of doing things, so very much unlike our own, and have been surprised at the excellent result. They have, in short, gone through the mill, sometimes happy, sometimes in absolute despair, and they have come out on top. Now they understand their *officier*, and he understands them.

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Despite the peculiarities of the French postal system, parcels do eventually arrive from England. It is, in time, possible to get warm clothes from home and to arrange for breakfast parcels common to all the mess. Sometimes with luck we find decent sleeping accommodation and a mess-room, and a kindly French woman to "do" for us. Life is so simple, when it is reduced to its most elementary conditions. The horrors of washing-up with no warm water when you have to do it three times a day, or the alternative of a greasy tin-plate, basin, and knife and fork! What do you know of these things at home? To appreciate the true beauties of fresh milk and butter, white bread, marmalade, and perhaps bacon from England, you must come out and do your bit, not with the British (they are pampered), but with the French.

There are guns, big and small, all around; they are never seen, but they sometimes talk very loudly. There are trenches, lines and lines of them, and barbed wire. What a fortune the wire manufacturers must have made out of this war! Coal is £4 a ton, and wood almost impossible to obtain; but then the convoy is in the war zone, and when the village of a normal civil population of 2,000 contains 7,000 troops, there is naturally both domestic and economic pressure.

The cars are close up to the lines, and yet, with the exception of one or two exposed bits of road, they always use their head-lamps. It seems absurd, after carrying wounded within four or five kilometres of the Germans, with blazing head-lights, to find London in almost total darkness. But then London does not, and probably never will, have much idea of what this war or the war atmosphere is like. This in some ways is a pity.

### FRENCH SOLDIERS.

The French troops are fine men. They have not the "smartness" of our early Expeditionary Force—I don't know whether that quality exists now—but they are essentially business-like. They march splendidly, are well equipped, good-humoured, and are out for business. No useless waste of life. Just to do as much damage as they can with as little cost as possible, which I take to be the highest art of war.

There is, alas, one drawback to our enjoyment of life, and that is that our cars will, in the course of time, break down. Nurse them ever so carefully on these roads, sometimes over *pavé* where you can feel your tyres doing little jumps from one stone to another, or in and out of shell holes, or in the ever-present mud, the end must inevitably come. Only a broken crown wheel, or a strained axle—in normal times a matter, perhaps, of ten days, but now, who knows? It goes to be repaired. For weeks there is no

news, and you are told it must take its turn. You could have home, bought the pieces, and repaired it yourself, with help, in two weeks, but that is contrary to regulations, so you sit and watch the German guns missing French aeroplanes, and, in return, the French guns missing the German (it ceases to be interesting after a time: they never hit), and you feel sorry for your old friend the car that has carried you so far and so well, and wonder whether in its time of sickness it is being properly cared for, and whether the operation will really be a success.

One by one the cars are *en panne*, and are towed away to a military motor hospital.

Eventually, in the ordinary course of events, they will all get there. We shall be a Section Sanitaire Anglaise without cars, but I suppose the section will still go on. Having once been constituted, it would be contrary to French administration to disband it. We shall draw rations, parade, wear our gas masks, attend occasional lectures, but instead of two or three sitting on the bank watching the butterfly-like planes high up in the sun, there will be the whole fifteen of us listening to stories of the glories that have departed. War, in any case, this war, is a game of endurance and patience, but it is dull, the dullest thing in all the wide world.

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### THE DULNESS OF ROUTINE.

War—this war—is deadly dull. The maximum of endurance and discomfort with the minimum of action. You imagine, you good people at home, that we are all enjoying ourselves out here. We are not. There is nothing to do. Routine, routine, routine! Some three or four kilometres off are the trenches. There are lots of trenches, but these I refer to are the live ones. In the rear are many more which may or may not be wanted, and the Germans have also, of course, lines of carefully prepared retiring positions. All around us are guns. We never see them, but we hear them, sometimes in ones and twos, sometimes in a continuous roar, for all the world like the vibration of a heavy convoy of waggons jolting down a badly paved street, with now and then an occasional big bang that forces open the door or violently rattles the window.

I have now been out with the French driving a motor ambulance for a few months, and have seen three Germans alive—they “came in.” One of my friends had asked me to bring home a German button. I glanced at their buttons, but it hardly seemed right either to demand or to petition for one.





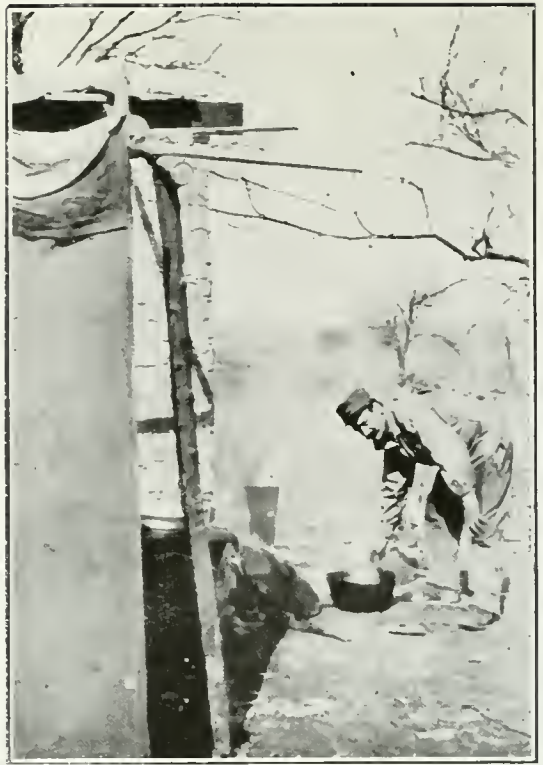
An ancient church.



Interesting and quite safe.



An improvised table.



The Cook and his kitchen.



Our dining room at Vadelaincourt.

Day by day our cars bump around, calling on hospitals, moving sick and wounded, waiting hours with lights out near the communication trenches, watching the flares and listening to occasional rifle shots, for the most part in a wierd, uncanny silence in the midst of many thousand armed and watchful troops.

Day after day, week after week—month after month. Will it be year after year?

The other day I visited a battery of heavy guns near here. They had not moved for many months. The dwelling-places of the battery were all that could be desired, quite charming little villas, three-quarters buried in the sand, panelled, with open hearths; comfortable and spotlessly clean, and decorated with the picturesque, if not always quite proper, frontispieces of "La Vie Parisienne."

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### NO ROOM FOR BRAINS.

A tall, dark-bearded man in French khaki spoke to me one day. His English was perfect, and I tried to imagine him as something in the City under a silk hat.

"Oh, yes," he said, in answer to my inquiries, "I was in London when the war broke out; had been there ten years."

"What are you doing now?"

"In charge of a machine-gun section."

"And what sort of a time are you having?"

"Oh, dull, dull; nothing to do. It has been the same ever since Mons, and then it was merry if you like."

"Did you enjoy that?" I asked, smiling.

His face lighted up. "Yes, that was the real thing." It's the same story all through—endurance and dulness, preparing for and awaiting The Day.

The military life (I am getting 2½d. a day) teaches you that discomforts do not exist. After a time you grow accustomed to them, and they disappear. Eat when you can, sleep when you can, and do your work! Don't try to be brilliant. This isn't a war of brilliancy, but of endurance. Above all, never think! You are just a machine, an infinitesimal little part, and all you have to think about is your minute little bit. You may see things going on around you that, as a business man, make you shudder, but if you are wise you will not even suggest an improvement. In that



direction lies trouble. Brains, thank Heaven! brains have no use in war. The whole thing from its very inception is so profoundly idiotic, so completely opposed to common-sense, and such an absolute waste of effort, that brains, except for organisation purposes, are positively in the way.

Take out with you enough to do your job, but leave the rest at home! The life doesn't call for them. It makes you strong, healthy, cheerful, gives you an excellent appetite, and brings sleep to you at any moment you call for it. It clears away care and brings forgetfulness of worries, sends you back to the primitive man to whom fear is not and whose wants are few. But as for thought! The War Cabinet is supposed to think, and also, I believe, the Staff: but the soldier mustn't.

\* \* \* \* \*

### A TRIP HOME.

The other day I went on leave. It took me a day to get to Paris, where I had to spend another day getting papers. The third day I got to Boulogne, the fourth I arrived in London. Before reaching Boulogne I had to get my papers *viséd*, and on inquiring was told I must call there on my way back. Eventually, after much delay, I got home. Later on I started to come out again. Was first sent to Folkestone when I ought to have gone to Southampton, but that, of course, only involved a delay of 24 hours or so and an expenditure of a few pounds. Eventually I got through to Paris, and wondered if my old friend at the office at Boulogne had missed me.

Oddly enough, I found it quite impossible in London to tell the truth. I had come from the French front on "permission," and was going back there, though I was not quite certain where. It seems simple enough to get home on six days' leave and return again, but it isn't. No Englishman, it seems, can be allowed to go to the French front unless it is quite certain where he is going, and I wasn't at all sure, as the convoy moves about every week or so, so I had to say "Paris" and trust to getting sent on from there. It's an amusing game, but foolish and a little tiring.

Now you understand why you must not think. Do you know what Red Tape is? If you do, and you surely must, multiply it by two and you have "Ad-min-is-tra-tion." The French are unfortunate because, while we congratulate ourselves, with some cause, that Red Tape mainly applies to our War Office, they have it in peace and war time all through their Government. In fact, they live under its shadow and are brought up side by side with it.

While we in England grumble at Red Tape and expect to meet with sympathy from our fellow-sufferers, no one thinks of grumbling at Administration. It is inevitable as Fate and relentless as death.

In fact—but why labour the subject? The only thing to do is to make yourself as familiar as you possibly can with all the rules of the game, and try to follow them. You cannot do it for long; you must run off the rails somewhere. Then you shrug your shoulders and wait. Everybody knows all about it and understands. No, there is no use for brains in the army. It has been laid down that brains are not to count.

I expect—happy thought!—that if we could but know the truth it's just as bad with the Germans.

The war may improve us as a race, bring back our failing virility, and clear away many old sores. We are told it will do all this and much more. But at what cost? A million perhaps of the best blood of our Empire, and for a time at least the complete triumph of matter over mind. Unhappily there is no other way out of it.

\* \* \* \* \*

1916.

## OUR INTRODUCTION.

We—Section Sanitaire Anglaise No. 10—had been running around Coeuvre evacuating little hospitals to Villers Cotterets, pleasant enough work over bad roads far away from the sound of the guns. We shared one big room together, and most of the members had provided themselves with mattresses and cunning little folding bedsteads. There was no night work, and not much to do in the day time. Then one day we got the order to be ready to move at fifteen minutes' notice, and were warned that somewhere the greater part of the baggage would have to be dropped.

At Villers Cotterets, at 4.30 a.m. the next morning, the convoy could be seen—by lamp-light—in the snow, starting off for it knew not where. Later on the sun came out and smiled at us, and we ran over good roads through charming country far south, and camped for the night near Bar-le-Duc. It was the next day that we began to see the ruins of French villages, and to realise what this war means to the French nation.

At — I photographed the ruins of a beautiful eleventh century church. The exterior was badly damaged and the outer roof entirely destroyed, but inside, if you were bold enough to risk the falling bricks and plaster, the place appeared to be almost intact. A little frost and rain, alas, will soon complete the work of devastation. All the houses around were destroyed by fire, the bare walls and old iron firebacks only remained.

By this time it had dawned upon us we were either going to St. Mihiel or Verdun. Nobody knew, not even our officer. At length, after one long day and night wandering about in the darkness, passing columns and columns of troops and service waggons, we arrived at 2 a.m. at a huge barracks near Fort Belrupt, overlooking Verdun. We had three hours to rest and rehabilitate our cars, and then had to begin the work of evacuation, for the place was full of wounded.

My car being for the time on the sick list, I intended to remain on my stretcher and get what sleep I could before being called out for duty. I saw the convoy start out to work, and then settled down, when bang, bang, bang! a battery, close at hand, woke me up with a start.

It was the beginning of the artillery duel. Soon from all sides the thunder commenced, and as the sun came out aeroplanes appeared, and the noise of anti-aircraft guns, with the occasional rattle of a mitrailleuse, added to the din. Sleep was impossible, even if curiosity had not tempted me out. For two hours I sat and watched the panorama of bombarded Verdun. I could see for nearly ten miles straight ahead, and the valley was five or six miles broad.

#### NEAR VERDUN.

Great black clouds of smoke arose suddenly from the ridge on the right and slowly dissipated themselves. Far away in front a French village, near Douaumont, was burning. From the wood near came a continuous rattle of French artillery. Then suddenly I caught sight of three Taubes, looking with their V-shaped tails like swallows in the sky. The battery ceased firing. The anti-aircraft guns woke up and dotted the blue heavens with little patches of white, through which the aeros flew as if absolutely unconcerned.

Far off I saw one of these Taubes drop a bomb which exploded some 100 feet in the air, and then emitted for a few seconds a burning fragment which smoked and curled out like a schoolboy's cracker. From over the hill behind me came a big French fighting biplane, and for a time the German airships disappeared.

About a mile from me on my right was another huge barracks, low-lying buildings of one storey, just like those we were occupying. Suddenly I heard three explosions, and realised that the German 310-millimetre guns were dropping shells into these barracks.

I heard that the place was full of troops, and yet these huge shells, which make a hole in the soft ground large enough to bury an ambulance car, seemed to cause very little damage. No casualties came up to us. The place smoked, but there was evidently nothing to set alight.

Verdun is of itself of no military importance. It is the forts around that constitute the stronghold, but the possession of Verdun means the subjugation of the forts. The fact that they can now from a distance of ten miles drop big shells into the place means nothing except that it is for the time being a distinctly unhealthy locality for the civilians, who have all very wisely cleared out. We met on our way here long lines of them slowly plodding their weary way through the mud.

As I sat and watched the big German shells bursting, with an occasional shrapnel, over the valley, I realised that at any time with a little switch to the left those big black monsters could be visiting us. The battery behind was a standing temptation to them, and I understood why it was necessary to clear the wounded at once.

### A HUNGRY CONVOY.

In the afternoon the members of the convoy began hour by hour to come in, telling stories of horrible roads and long hours spent in weary processions behind moving troops. One more night we spent there, and on that occasion four ambulances did not return. They drove till they were exhausted, and then, tired of crawling home, drew up on the side of the road and made themselves as comfortable as the conditions would admit until daylight appeared. One of them returned after we had left the barracks the next day, could learn nothing about us, and it was only by good fortune I later found him, disconsolate and very hungry, in a village five miles away.

We left those barracks and spent the day on the side of the road, leaving our baggage, petrol tins, etc., all piled up on a heap of stones, while the cars were cleared for duty. For two days we had had no rations issued to us. It was impossible to buy anything, and our private supplies of stores were getting very low, while, alas! most of the good things in tins—and one large ham just brought out from England!—had all been left behind at a village the other side of the Meuse. Personally I lived on chocolate and army bread and some tinned salmon I had managed to procure at Dugny. Never again will I despise tinned salmon—it was absolutely delicious.

Our officer found us a room in another barracks for the night, and as absolutely no light was allowed we turned in about 6 p.m.

Early next morning we were told we were to be established at an isolated farm, and we looked forward to it, as anyhow we thought we should have water, plenty of sleeping room, and possibly even milk. It was only when I realised the direction we were

taking that I began to have doubts about these luxuries. We passed the barracks we had occupied for two days, and made our way slowly to the wood on the right. As we went along there were strange bangs round about and whistles in the air. At last we reached our "farm." It consisted of a large tin shed.

### BAPTISM OF FIRE.

We packed our cars, twelve of them, close side by side, one of them full of big tins of petrol. All around in the woods were troops, waggons, guns, horses, etc. The air was alive with whizzes of all kinds. Bits of earth were flying about. Shells were coming towards us. I could hear their whistle growing louder and louder or passing away as they came direct or fell to one side or other. An anti-aircraft gun very near us began to make our heads ache.

From the woods men with red crosses on their arms carried up the wounded. The German shells at first flew harmlessly over our heads, and it was interesting to watch how the various members of the convoy, French and English alike, nodded to them. We had long been provided with helmets, but even the casque won't stop a 5in. shell.

As car after car left with its load, and as shell after shell dropped 30 yards to one side or the other, I knew it was only a question of time before we should have one in our midst, and there would be no more Section Sanitaire Anglais No. 10. Before the game began to get too hot I managed to take some photos. Later on, when clouds of loose earth began to descend upon us, I thought it wiser to try and find what little cover I could.

One member of the convoy, having read in a book that the best thing to do when subjected to shell fire was to fall flat on the face, insisted upon doing so, in spite of the mud, whenever that whizz came. Of course it was unwise to take cars to a position like that. Our lieutenant realised that at once, and did his best to get us out, with the result that we all left hurriedly in two hours' time.

I got a hole through my handbag and one through the mudguard of my car. Other members had similar little mementoes. We were lucky, and later on, as we watched from a safe distance the place being burnt down and heard from the lieutenant that he was very pleased with us, we all felt glad we had at last "been there."

Now we live in a riding school close to Verdun, where we sleep, eat, and garage our cars. Close to us outside in the meadow are three big holes large enough to take one ambulance car each. They came the other night. But those things worry us no more. I saw 30 German shells fall



about half a mile ahead of me yesterday afternoon. They all came practically together. That place is at least three miles from here, and the shells must have flown over this building. The modern gun has great power, but fortunately at long ranges absolute accuracy is out of the question.

One of the things that strikes one in modern warfare is the truly awful waste of ammunition.

\* \* \* \* \*

### WORKING AT NIGHT.

From our garage we have been doing a continuous service to a place beyond that little "isolated farm" in the country. I was one of the three to do a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. service on the first night. It was a dark, damp night, and no lights were allowed. In order to be sure of the road I volunteered to run up in the day time, and so knew the way to some extent. But motoring by daylight and at night without lights is quite a different thing. At night, also, I found the road through the woods crowded with all sorts of Army paraphernalia, was blinded by the flashes of the guns, while the atmosphere, foggy through the use of gas shells, made my eyes smart and weep copiously. The place is only some five miles away, yet it took me four hours to get there and back.

Along that narrow, twisty road I went through woods in absolute pitch darkness, with mud nine inches deep ready to engulf me on either side, with guns flashing and shells shrieking, misty forms suddenly appearing almost under the wheels of my car, ammunition convoys jostling their way back for fresh supplies, dead horses, broken down carts, flashing signals rendering the darkness still more intense, the pungent smell not bad enough to call for a gas mask, the struggle to keep on the road, the cries of "Halte!" as I found myself driving into a column of soldiers or a convoy of waggons, and the harsh words of command!—I shall never forget that road.

There was only about a mile of it, yet it took me an hour either way each of the three times I went over it that night. And the return journey with four bad stretcher cases inside! The care to avoid hitting anything—twice I collided with munition waggons and once with a tree—the groans from the car as I lurched in and out of a shell hole, the long wait at the hospital before I could unload!

The strain increased, and on my third journey, with the effect, I suppose, of the gas, I literally couldn't see at all, or rather I had got to the stage of seeing things that were not there. Strange and impossibly shaped horses loomed up in front of me. I stopped the car and there was nothing.

On the way up I ran into the mud, and it took me twenty minutes to get out. Then we all three overshot our destination and got into the mud again. About twenty soldiers came to my rescue and pushed me out backwards, but that took another hour, and all the time shrapnel was illuminating the darkness, and whistling very close through the trees. I wondered if I were really enjoying myself.

But these muddy adventures had their good point. By the time I was ready to move again the blessed daylight had begun to come. With joy I realised I could actually see the road, and at last I got back to my straw at 8 a.m.

Since then I have done that journey several times, but the frost has hardened the mud, the wind is in the wrong direction for German gas attacks, and the enemy, I believe, are not quite so near that little lane in the woods as they were.

The Poste de Secours is gradually falling to pieces, but there is a cellar, and in that we seek our loads night after night.

On my last journey I noticed as I drove home that my one and only stretcher case did not complain when I struck a bad bit of road. I could hear the three "sitters" talking, not a moan from the stretcher. I had driven as carefully as possible, missing all the shell holes, and I congratulated myself. But when he was taken out at the hospital I understood—he was dead.

### MILITARY SERVICE.

It is interesting and a little amusing to note the different ways in which the English and the French regard Military Service. France has had conscription for generations, every man, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, must serve. There is no getting out of it. If you are of suitable age and fit you must do your duty with the rest. There is no suggestion of honour and glory in it. It is just a disagreeable duty to be faced. In France nobody thinks the better of you for going; you have to go. If by any possible chance you don't have to go, you consider yourself exceedingly fortunate and stay at home.

With us, of course, it is all the other way about. Some 95 per cent. of our Army are volunteers. Practically none of them has "had to go": they have joined voluntarily. They have responded to the national call for the honour and glory and the fun of the thing. They were not compelled, but offered themselves freely.

The Frenchman can understand with a little difficulty a man of suitable age volunteering, but it puzzles him completely to grasp the point of view



of a man of, say, 56, who brings out his own valuable car and works hard under the most trying conditions for 2½d. a day.

So also the English ladies who come out and scrub hospital floors for nothing worry him not a little. The French soldier quite seriously supposes that they do this in the ordinary course at home.

War to him is a sad national necessity which the Government, with the nation at its back, has to face. To come out and scrub floors for the fun of the thing, or to sacrifice your best car and all your own time, when you are not called upon to do so, is to him incomprehensible.

Funny people the English, very! They do it, he supposes, because they like it.

When I told one of them some time ago that the car was mine, he said, "But surely our Government has taken it over and paid for it."

"No," I said, "it is a gift so long as the war lasts."

I have since heard he took care to verify this information, and now he regards us with an expression of distinct curiosity. I cannot tell whether or not it is flattering—but fear not.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DASH THROUGH SHELL STORM.

MARCH 8, 1916.

I was ordered out yesterday afternoon on a car I had not driven before—a Buick—to take a padre and two men to Tavanne and bring back wounded. On the way there, in the daylight at 5.30, I saw my road was being bombarded. It was absolutely clear—a bad sign—and the French soldiers lower down pointed out to me Jack Johnsons smoking higher up. Also I saw lots of little splodges across the road made by 5in. shells.

What was I to do? There was about half a mile of that road. The car was going all right. I must either reverse quarter of a mile and wait in comparative safety, as I heard afterwards the next car did, or risk it.

I decided to do the latter, set my teeth, looked neither to right nor to left, paid no attention to the flashes or to the shell holes, and made that car travel at its very best. The men inside must have got a considerable jolting.

I reached the fort all right, and was agreeably surprised when the doctor in charge shook hands and congratulated me. I found my wounded waiting, but was not allowed to turn out for two hours.

Part of that time I went to the entrance of the fort and watched the flashes and listened to the whizzes.

Suddenly the wood on my right burst into flame, a number of French 75's simultaneously opened fire, and turned the darkness into daylight. For ten or fifteen minutes the rattle went on continuously like many machine guns. Where the shells dropped in the distance a bright red glow sprang up and disappeared as the guns ceased.

I was told that the Germans had left their trenches and were making an attack after their long bombardment, and this was their reception. I cannot imagine how anything can have been left alive in that terrible hail of shells.

The journey home was peaceful enough after my experience on the way out. For three-quarters of an hour I was held up with a block of traffic, and wondered why none of the shells flying around found us. We should have been a good harvest for well-placed shrapnel. I was nervous about that half-mile of road, but peace had descended upon it when I got there, and all was well.

A French conductor behind me got a shell clean through the carriage work of his empty ambulance. Fortunately, he and his *aide* escaped, but the car was minus one wheel for some time. I have just seen the holes, of which he is very proud.

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#### A FAMOUS ROAD.

There is one French railway into the salient of Verdun. The road from Bar-le-Duc to Verdun measures 58 kilometres, about 35 miles. For more than a month now many camions (heavy and light lorries), innumerable motor omnibuses, and military cars have been unceasingly plying backwards and forwards over that highway. Troops, guns, ammunition of all kinds, food, the whole reinforcement of all these things has gone to the front by road. A small army of men is busy keeping the thoroughfare in repair. The traffic is directed and organised most carefully. Once I was on it near Verdun on a little job of my own, in the middle of a convoy conveying heavy ammunition, when we were saluted with about 50 shells that a German balloon had kindly initiated. The whole hillside suddenly seemed to be on fire. Happily they were a little previous.

I spent two or three nights in an extemporised hospital built half-way along the road. The little window facing my stretcher bed looked out on to a continual succession of motor lights slowly moving, at regular intervals, towards Verdun, for all the world like the lamps of some interminable marine parade set in motion. Day and night, these camions run up and down. There are two men on each. One sleeps while the other drives. Perhaps sometimes they are allowed a day off. I don't know. Their



The girl we lost our hearts to.



Cameras might be used with discretion.



Hospital Tents.



Interior.



Sleeping quarters at Vadelaincourt.



devotion has been beyond words. Sometimes one meets a mile of these cars, then an interval of a few hundred yards, then half a mile, and so on. I saw one upset down the bank. It contained shell cartridges, and the petrol tank was slowly distributing its contents over them. I did not linger to see the result. This road, with the men who have worked these lorries, will become—has already become—famous. Even heavy guns are now-a-days taken up in lorries, and troops in motor omnibuses. The motor has displaced the railway. A road may be in places under shell fire, but it is infinitely easier to repair than a railway line, and, given a sufficiency of lorries, the weight of traffic that can be carried is not only far greater, but more elastic and more easy to handle and regulate.

### HELMETS.

We had our gas masks and goggles issued to us in November last, and very pretty we looked in them! Later on we got a new pattern of gas mask, and a fortnight before Verdun our steel helmets. Every French soldier is provided with a helmet, and, though they generally give the wearer a headache for the first few days, their value is thoroughly appreciated. It is not only against shrapnel that these casques are very useful, but also for protection against the hard mud and showers of stones that percussion shells throw up. We learn to value them very much, and we never went out without them under fire. The British, I see, have not yet got half a million. Ours is indeed a weird Government. Perhaps the necessary 3,000,000 will be ready in two years' time.

Why do we continue to make ourselves the laughing-stock of the world over this recruiting business? The French cannot understand us, and I don't blame them. Compulsion for all men of military age is the only way, and it is twelve months overdue, and yet our old ladies at Westminster still go on haggling over exemptions and conscientious scruples. Send the House of Commons and the Cabinet out here for a month. One is beginning to be half-ashamed of being an Englishman.

I hear that one French officer has put in a very excellent report of our work at Verdun, and that we have been mentioned in dispatches. This is really nice of him. At the same time, we all have an uneasy feeling that we might have done better. Perhaps another opportunity will arrive. There is something very fascinating in picking up wounded under conditions as near to Hell as I wish to imagine. After one gets accustomed to the noise of the guns and shells, and finds that somehow one doesn't get hit, and that there are always four wheels on the car, it is with a feeling of genuine satisfaction over a good night's work that one returns to the cosy sleeping bag.

## A FEW WAR ITEMS.

There is no doubt that the German troops, in their disastrous attack on Vaux, were drugged. I forget the name of the liquor they were provided with: they carried it in bottles, and it was stronger than whisky. I was told by the medicine chef at one of the forts that many of the prisoners taken that night were inebriated, and the story has since been confirmed from many sources. They came on sixteen deep, the front ranks stooping down with a hand shading their eyes, and their dead lay in a heap over six feet high.

It is also true that in some cases the German gunners are chained to their guns.

The average duration of life of the German liquid fire operator in action must be exceedingly short. This apparatus, which is carried on the back of one man with a pump operated by another, has a range of about 40 yards, and, as the mixture is naturally much lighter than air, and therefore curls up at the end, its actual working range is reduced to 35 yards or even less. To ensure the proper manipulation of this truly German device, it is necessary for both men to stand upright. Walking upright to within thirty or forty yards of a French trench is the quickest method I can imagine of solving the great question of the Future. What happens? The first man is killed, a second takes his place, then a third, and so on. Truly German discipline, and German courage, is marvellous.

Since the introduction of masks the German gas attacks are no longer feared. So long as the masks are worn tightly enough the gas can do no harm, and to ensure this precaution being properly carried out all the French soldiers at the front have had to shave off their beards.

The 1916 class, boys of 20, are already with the German troops, some of them dead or wounded at Verdun. After the 1916 class there remains the 1917, now boys of 19, and then no more. Query, how long will the war last?

In the actual attacks and repulses there are not many prisoners taken.

The days of the permanent fort are over. It is not worth while building a redoubt strong enough to resist a German 17in. shell—Liège and Namur taught the world the destructive power of 380's and 420's. Around Verdun there are plenty of forts. If the enemy choose to knock these mounds to pieces, he can do so.

It follows that the extraordinarily heavy artillery of the Germans is no longer worth either its cost or its trouble. A shell that costs £1,000 or more may be indispensable against a battleship, but can anyone conceive any object on land that is worth the expenditure of several hundred of these monsters? And, after all, their effect is not so very terrible. Probably

the damage done to Verdun itself is not so great as the cost of the shells employed in doing it, and, from a military point of view, against troops in the open or trenches, the money would be far better expended on smaller and more mobile and rapid firing artillery.

I have listened to a continuous heavy German bombardment for twenty-four hours. I have seen the woods peppered with heavy shells, the black smoke of the 15in. slowly curling up from the trees, the flashes of the bursting shrapnel just above them. It sounded very dreadful. At the end of the twenty-four hours the German infantry endeavoured to make an advance. The woods that had endured all this heavy gunnery, and ought to have been dead, woke up as if nothing had happened, the men came out of their dug-outs, the light rapid firing 75's spoke with one voice for ten minutes, and one more costly German attack was over.

The fort has been superseded by the trench, the monster gun is a failure, the infantry still remain the great deciding factor in warfare with the machine-gun and the bayonet.

As for those examples of German frightfulness, the gas attack, the liquid fire machine, they have also their antidotes. The ingenious Hun must invent something else.

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#### REST.

We left Verdun on March 10th, some with gun-headache, most of us exceedingly tired. The iron-roofed riding school in which we "slept," with our cars, and shared with a French convoy of Fiats, vibrated with every heavy gun fired from a battery behind. Shrapnel occasionally burst a short distance away. There were three big "Jack Johnson" holes in the field near. One night the roof rattled and window-panes fell out under a shower of something we knew not what, and didn't much care. Cars came in and left at all hours of the day and night, smothering us with their exhausts. For fourteen days we had not our clothes off, and slept only in fitful half-hours. One mentally remonstrated that after having run the gauntlet of "shell lane," the never-ceasing bombardment should sound closer at night, and disturb our few hours' rest. *Mais c'est la guerre.* It was a question of endurance, and we were new to the conditions. So we left Verdun very willingly, after having done our bit, and once again our French officer was pleased to be complimentary. "Hurrah! To-night we will dine at a café. We will have baths, take off our clothes, and perhaps sleep in a bed." We have had enough of war for the time being, and both ourselves and our cars want a rest. Out of an original 17 motor ambulances only nine were able to take the road, and one of these, alas! at the end of



a rope. The melting snow made travelling difficult, and all the way to Bar-le-Duc, some 58 kilometres, we followed, and passed, an endless succession of lorries and motor omnibuses. We might, but for the condition of the road, have been in the City. At last we arrived, and waited patiently in a square for three or four hours, hungry, but expectant. Then the order came to be *en route* again, and in twenty minutes we were pulled up a few kilometres farther on in a narrow lane, deep with mud, where, with nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep—our cars were full of petrol and stores—we were left to spend the night as best we could. O happy organisation! We did not want a palace, but only rest, food, and soap and water. *C'est la guerre*, we were told, and we didn't altogether believe it. We had learnt to lie comfortably on stretchers, and luxuriously on straw; it wasn't amusing to sit up all night, weary, unwashed, unshaven, and hungry, waiting for the dawn.

When that long night was over, we got back to the town, and got rooms—helped ourselves to them, and now I have a real bed, with blankets and sheets, plenty of water, even warm water, a writing table: in fact, all the comforts of modern civilisation. We dine where we choose, being under the impression that we deserve to do ourselves well. Even the post is arriving. Alternately, we do twenty-four hours' duty moving wounded from stations to hospitals, or *vice versa*. The sun is shining, and all is well. Even one of the broken-down cars, which we have not seen for five months, has come back.

#### VADELAINCOURT.

Have you ever been to Vadelaincourt? Of course not. Well, don't go! It is a little village 15 kilometres from Verdun, and lies at the bottom of a muddy little valley with a muddy little stream running through it. In fine weather it is all dust; in wet, thick soupy mud. When our convoy first made its acquaintance in the early days of Verdun the cars had great difficulty in ploughing through; a month later the roads had been scraped, and big banks along all the lanes testified to the work done, but the mud was still there, plenty of it.

The hospital consists of wood shanties and tents. When the rains come, it is almost under water, and from hut to hut and tent to tent little raised paths have been constructed, presumably to prevent the staff being drowned.

We left Bar-le-Duc at 5 one morning, and arrived here at 8. We have now been here a week without any work to do.

There are English, American, and Franco-British sections, about forty-four cars in all. Some of us sleep in our ambulances, others in a very

dirty shed on ancient straw and hay, very much alive, but, fortunately, with animals that seem disinclined to change their residences. A rat sleeps, when the visiting cat will let it, in the corner next to me. The shed is about four-fifths roofed, and we have closed some of the broken windows with hospital blankets, but the rain comes in down one side, and the wind blows through in gales. It is necessary to tread very gently, or clouds of live dust would settle all over the sleeping bags.

On the opposite side to ours sleep some twenty British Red Cross *conducteurs* from one of the English convoys lent to the French. One of them plays on the flute regularly from 8.30 to 10 every night, "Lead, Kindly Light," "Sweet and Low," "The Rosary," etc. I hear him in my dreams mixed with the noise of the guns ten miles away and the rattle of an occasional midnight aeroplane.

Four or five times a day a priest, and an acolyte bearing a Cross, go by, and behind an old cart bringing for burial five more men from the hospital. The evacuation to the cemetery goes on day by day as regularly as the evacuation to the railway station. There are no mourners. We stand up and salute. The priest in his dirty white robe, the ancient cart, the soiled French flag with its tribute to the men who have died to save France—*Mort pour la patrie*—together with the muddy cemetery with its closely packed rows of little wooden crosses, will live in my memory with the groans of the men I helped to carry down from Fort Tavanne on those ghastly midnight journeys in and out of hell.

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### THE FRENCH SOLDIER.

Let me say a word or two in praise of that wonderful man, the French soldier. My few months' experience out here has taught me how Napoleon won his victories. It is not a question of bravery or courage: there is probably nothing to choose between the nations in this respect. But it is his marvellous patience and endurance. I have no hesitation in saying that the French soldier will endure and fight and continue to endure and fight when the Englishman would be very likely to "go on strike." Look at Verdun. French soldiers met and beat off that huge German onslaught of 450,000 men, backed up with 3,000 pieces of artillery, for five days. The same men, without rest, some without food, for forty-eight hours together. They retired and retired, giving back yard by yard, pouring in shrapnel from their 75's, getting home again and again with the bayonet, inflicting losses three to one. The weight of metal thrown by those powerful German guns was terrible. For a long time the defending force could make but a feeble reply to it. The Germans had counted on battering a way

through, as they did in Russia. For days the ceaseless hail of shells went on. The French soldier waited, enduring it, waited until the infantry attack came, and then the Boches paid in full.

The *Service de Sante* is the poor relation of the French Army. It has been greatly strengthened and improved by outside aid, but it is far, far from perfect. Night after night I have spent in improvised hospital yards with my car full of wounded waiting hours to be unloaded. I have seen the wounded who were able to walk trudging down four, five, or eight kilometres to the hospital to be left there many hours outside in snow and sleet without food or help except such little aid as we could sometimes give them. It is not the fault of the doctors—they were worked to death—merely that ample arrangements hadn't been made. Yet it was all so obvious, and so pathetic, and the French Tommy took it all as a matter of course and didn't grumble. Well may France be proud of her soldiers.

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AUGUST, 1916.

I left the convoy being overhauled at Bar le Duc. In August, 1916, I rejoined, driving over the latest thing in American ambulances, strong, powerful, and slow.

My Minerva, I heard, was doing useful work in Paris.

En route our transport was held up for twelve hours in the Solent awaiting the kindly attentions of the torpedo-boat that shepherded us across. What a relief it was to cross on a military boat, and be saved all the long tedious delays and worries of passport and medical examination.

We saw our cars on board, got leave till the boat started, and had no further trouble, and at Havre all that it was necessary to do was to wait till the ambulances were swung on to the dock side, get them filled up with "essence," and then start on the lovely run up the Seine, where the sun was blessing the busy harvesters, through Rouen, to Paris.

None of the depredations of war are visible in this beautiful district, but Havre and Rouen are so full of British soldiers that it is difficult to realise that one is not still in Eiggland.

A night or two in Paris awaiting orders, and then another delightful run by the side of the Marne to Vitry. I saw very few signs of the Germans. A few destroyed houses, a few graves in the fields. In one inn a German bullet fired through the door by some Boche in a playful mood still remained in a fractured mirror. Sentries stopped us and examined our papers, and at last we reached Bar le Duc, which was not quite so full of troops, lorries, and all the organisations of war as when I left three months before. It is difficult to get a meal in these places. All

the little inns, which are remarkably reasonable in their prices, must have made their fortunes long ago.

I found the convoy 15 kilometres away, rejuvenated in men and cars, and doubled in size, perched on the top of a hill, idling in the sunshine, and worried with the flies. The guns sounded far away. There were rumours of plenty of work to come in a day or two. All the convoy cars are now practically of the same type—a light lorry with a heavy ambulance body of wood. These “buses” are useful, amenable, and, fortunately, for we have no billets beyond our big mess tent, can be made into very fair sleeping quarters. The dust and the flies are the chief troubles, but these are only to be expected and endured.

I have a sort of combined summer Balaclava helmet and goggles, which make me look like a gargoyle, but save a great deal of soap and water.

#### ANOTHER VERDUN EXPERIENCE.

The Section had an interesting ten days near Verdun in my absence. They ran into that dilapidated town every night, and spent the time in the cellars until they could get away with their wounded.

Here is the report on our work:—

“From Second-Lieutenant Klingelhofer, commanding the S.S.A. 10, to the Medicine Principal, in charge of the Medical Service of the 31st Division of Infantry:—

“The S.S.A. 10 consists of ambulance cars presented and driven by English drivers, all of whom have passed the age limit (three are more than 50, six more than 45, and three more than 40 years old), or been rejected by the British military authorities.

“The Section was attached to the 31st Infantry Division on July 31st, 1916, and was entrusted with the removal of the wounded of the division from the Thiaumont-Fleury sector, from the 3rd to the 15th August, 1916. The cars worked from Bras, La Sape de Belfort, and Belleville to Verdun, and from there to La Queue de Malat, Fontaine Bouton, and Baleycourt. The night work was particularly hard, as the cars had to run without lights over roads which were under artillery fire, such roads being full of artillery convoys and much knocked about by shell fire. During this period the Section has removed 3,257 wounded or sick cases; three cars have been damaged or struck by shell splinters; most of the drivers suffered from dysentery, but refused to be relieved, having at heart the continuation of the service during this very busy time.”

3,257 removals in thirteen days was hard enough work to satisfy anyone. The difficulty was driving night and day to keep awake. Every 36 to 48

hours one had to sleep : the alternative was disaster. It is possible to sleep riding and even marching I believe, but no one has yet succeeded in doing so satisfactorily when driving a car.

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The convoy has a new French officer in charge, and everyone is happy and full of zeal. Our old worries, most of them entirely unnecessary, seem to have completely disappeared, and all is well. May we be really useful and have good fortune.

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A very fair sample of a tropical thunderstorm visited us yesterday. It blew in our big mess tent in which I was sleeping, fortunately without damage, and three of us had an interesting hour between 3 and 4 a.m. in our pyjamas out in the rain driving in the pegs. The inevitable result of the storm was a very muddy field, and cars on duty had to be pushed out by hand to the hard road. A week of this, and we should have stuck fast.

The news has just arrived that Rumania has come in.

Some of the villages round here are intact, others a hopeless mass of ruins. The German seems to have been very capricious in his artillery attentions.

The road to Verdun is comparatively—as compared with March and April last—deserted. A few convoys of camions only; the endless stream no longer flows.

I saw a fresh regiment of infantry motored up in 'buses the other day, and later on the same cars returned full of weary men, covered with mud from head to foot, many of them asleep. They greeted us in a way that left no doubt of their joy in returning to peace and quietness.

We have spent three weeks in our muddy field, playing bridge and chess and waiting for work. Every day we are "going to work" and we are still here, but the time will come.

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We left Rumont on September 11th on the hottest of days. The convoy, two-thirds of a mile long, stirred up the dust, and passing convoys doubled it, until we were soon as white as millers and as thirsty as the desert.

It was only a two hours' trip, and at 11.30 a.m. we were drawn up in line in the field where we were to spend days or weeks or months—who knows?





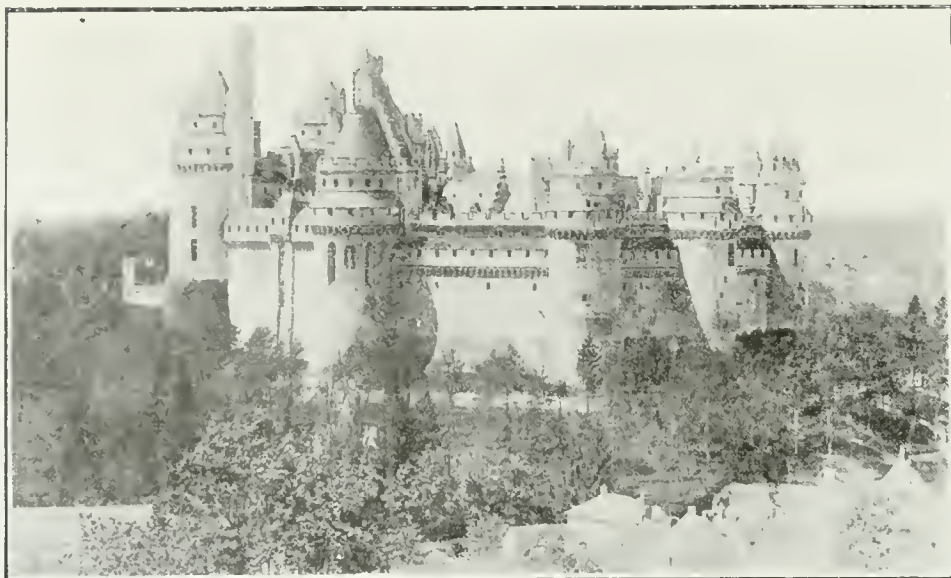
The little wooden crosses.



The " farm " at Bellevue.



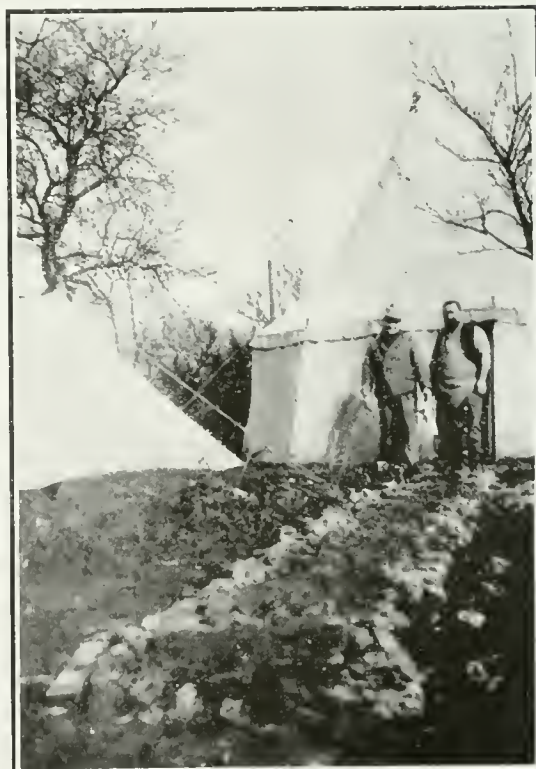
Comfortable quarters near Villers Coterets.



Pierrefonds Chateau—Rebuilt.



The "Maison" Cemetery.



André and Maurice.



Our route took us nearly to Clermont through several ruined villages, to Rarecourt, where the Germans had been for nine days but had done little damage. It was there we encamped. Four hours later I was off on duty to the Maison Forestiere, in the Argonne—a little Poste de Secours in the Forest within three kilometres of the German lines, where everybody lived underground.

I arrived in the dark and was shown my dug-out, and noticed the rats scampering round. I preferred to sleep in my car, shells or no shells, and spent a peaceful evening with not a shell falling within a mile.

The lines have been unchanged here for two years, and the dug-outs, communications, trenches, and cemetery are consequently all rather elaborate.

### OUR DAILY LIFE.

There are now twenty-five of us, ranging in age from 22 to 57. Our cars are all drawn up in line in a field, which will inevitably become unpleasantly muddy. To-day the sun is shining, and all the cars are open, back, sides, and front, taking the air. There are five or six gaps, representing the ambulances out on duty. Nearly all the machines are G.M.C.'s from America, light lorries, slow but sure. A glance into the ambulance bodies reveals all sorts and conditions of cleanliness. The cars next on duty are stripped ready for action. Of the others, some are clean, some are not. In one you see a sleeping bag comfortably arranged on a suspended stretcher, towels and washing materials, sponge bag, mirror, etc., all neatly "fixed." The driver sleeps in his car, and takes a pride in it and in himself. Next to this you see a higgledy-piggledy arrangement of dirty boots, primus stove, frying pans, sleeping clothes, a few stray eggs on the seat. All these, when a call comes, will be thrown out at a moment's notice, left under a rug, and be sorted and possibly cleaned when the opportunity arrives. Some eight or ten of us sleep in a barn. It is more convenient though less independent than using one's car, and has the advantage that the ambulance is always ready for use. Others have found rooms in the village. We get up a little before 7, partially dress, find a cup of hot coffee in the kitchen, and bread and butter and jam or tinned food in the tent, and then, if it is not our turn out, proceed at 8 to make a leisurely and complete toilet in the open at the back of the cars, with water brought from the well. We are not allowed to drink any water in this village. Those who have come in overnight generally postpone their ablutions until the dirty work on the car has been attended to. There is more need for soap and water then. So at 9 o'clock you can see a dozen or so of half-naked Englishmen enjoying themselves with soap and water, and many towels—some clean—hanging in the sun to dry.

At eleven we have *dejeuner*, or "soup." There is a long, cranky table down the centre of the tent, and cranky forms unevenly balanced on which to sit. The cook (who isn't a cook, as, alas! we found out long ago, but a barber in Paris) brings in some hot meat and vegetables. These last are generally white beans; there seems to be a scarcity of potatoes. The meat may or may not be eatable, the odds are against it, but there are parcels from England. Perhaps someone has brought out a ham—its life is short—and there are tinned peaches and apricots and jam, with bread and butter. The latter, happily, generally tastes better than it smells. Afterwards coffee, with perhaps a *souffçon* of rum in it—"Café avec"—is quite good. No, on the whole, we don't live luxuriously.

Our evening meal at six o'clock is a replica of the first.

We have red and white wine to drink, and some beer. One eats to live: there isn't any pleasure in our meals nor in the continual cleaning up of cups and knives and forks afterwards, but food is a necessity, and has to be endured.

In bad weather the tent shelters us all, and we amuse ourselves as best we can in the intervals between work, and are most of us back again in our little flea-bags by nine o'clock. To remind us that there may some day be a call for all our energies, the guns close at hand keep up an erratic concert—we have ceased to be even interested in them. They have become monotonous. There is none of that mosquito-like singing noise that means you are well in the danger zone, and that for all you know your number may be up.

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The personnel of the convoy is perhaps the most interesting study of all. Watch the gradual development of the newly-arrived member who has left a life of ease and luxury at home, to rough it out here. The shocks to his mental equanimity when he discovers slowly but surely that he does not know everything about motor-cars, that he is not necessarily the final authority on war matters, that his long stories, so much enjoyed, let us hope, by a devoted, admiring family at home, are not even listened to.

The gentle digs, sometimes not too gentle, that day by day come to him from his critical companions; the long days and weeks of waiting, and then the sudden strain of really hard work under fire—the ordeal that finds out the man. This study of character, and character development of success and failure, is more interesting than even the war itself. There is the man who talks and the man who works. Some men's experiences are always terrible; others come home and say nothing, and it is only afterwards you learn that they must have had at least an interesting time.

And the surprises you get! The men you don't expect to do well amaze you by the placid way they take, in an emergency, everything that comes; the grumbler ceases to grumble, and even is apparently satisfied with his food; the absorbing interest in his work, and those singing shells make a different man of him for the time being.

Then the disappointments, the drivers whose cars suddenly develop mysterious defects and show a disinclination to face the music, but, *voilà!* there it is, they cannot help it, and it is not to be supposed they are proud of it, and happily it is generally only temporary.

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To-day I am on duty for twenty-four hours in a dug-out; my car stands outside under the trees. It is a little *Poste de Secours* about five kilometres from the German lines, a small Red Cross settlement all underground, in the middle of a wood. To get to my modest habitation you go down four or five deep steps, about two feet deep each; you then stoop down, hit your head against the roof, and enter your dry earth room. There is a table and two benches, and a mud couch wide enough for two people. There is also an open fireplace, which is very useful, as it is raining hard. I lunched there, and I shall dine there to-night, and probably in time I shall learn not to hit my head against the beam over the door.

We had a *recherché* lunch, my aide and I. *Soupe à l'Oxo*, tinned tongue, bread and cheese, and chocolate, and a bottle of Graves, all by candle light. To-night we open with tinned lobster instead of soup, and the rest of the menu the same as at lunch. So we do ourselves well.

In the meantime we have taken four wounded down to Rarecourt.

There is a particularly steep and rough hill to descend, and the journey was interesting to me, if not to my cases. The road was too narrow to allow the car to turn round, as it persistently tried; besides, it is exceedingly difficult work going down a steep hill backwards, so I had to allow it to slide its hindquarters gently against the bank and then start again. We got down all right without using much petrol. We also just got up coming back, my back wheels going "all out" and the car crawling.

A little more rain and a dark night—lights are forbidden—and that hill will be impossible.

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Six of our members have got the Croix de Guerre. Our English officer and our hard-worked sergeant received it after our first visit to Verdun. The other four were awarded it after their second stay in that interesting

and ever-to-be-remembered city. Alas! I missed the second visit. We are quite willing and even anxious to go and stay there months. It is the best thing we have seen, and this life is dull compared with it.

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Life is becoming interesting. The rain has disappeared, we no longer wallow in mud, our rheumatism has gone, the sun shines, and we have got a Cook—a real Cook.

He came from a General. There was some trouble about the potatoes, I believe. Anyhow, we are faring well. He can make the rations eatable, and with the etceteras we supply, some of his dishes are really tempting. The other night (tell it in a whisper) we had five courses. It is true we cannot manage more than two clean plates each, but, with a little bread to clean up with between, what does that matter? One can easily arrange the meat course on the soup plate, and even the entree, but it is almost indispensable to have a clean plate for chocolate soufflé, and then there comes the difficulty of how to deal with one's cheese. And we have coffee and milk for breakfast and coffee after *déjeuner* and dinner. It is true we still have only the one knife, fork, and spoon each, which we carry about with us among our most precious possessions and sometimes try to clean. To be always cleaning knives, forks, and spoons and cups is a nuisance, but some mess cutlery for general use has been ordered, and then we shall be able to keep our own little outfits for use while on duty.

One of our members has got knives that won't rust, and only want wiping with a cloth. Their never failing brightness makes mine try and hide themselves ashamed under the rim of my plate.

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We are messing in our tent, which is too warm in fine weather, too cold at other times, and dripping wet when the rain comes, but close at hand a big wooden hut is being erected, 30 metres by 10. It is not for us, we are told, but we think we know better. It is close to our cars, so close that either it is for us, or we are to be moved on, and as our Division is here for many weeks we draw our own conclusions, and dream of palaces with boarded floors and two stoves. Our tent has no floor; it is the end of September; sit in it after dinner and your feet become lumps of ice. Soon the time for tents will be over, and, well, they are building a hut just where we want it.

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## A PREHISTORIC PEEP.

Two days ago, a French officer came along and took me for a walk to improve his English and my exceedingly bad French.

In the distance I saw three huts like the one that is not for us. We went there, and the kindly Captain in charge showed us round. In one of these warm, cosy structures 96 men were sleeping, and there were hooks on which to hang things and all sorts of home-like comforts.

Then we were shown where the men lived before these places were erected. Buried in the wood, quite out of reach of prying German aeroplanes, was a little pre-historic native village. Little mud huts sealed round with clay, picturesque half-timbered one-storied buildings, some faced with moss, others with bracken, or closely fenced with twigs, huts of all shapes and sizes, a few with boarded walls and floors, all containing their home-made bedsteads and rows of shelves, some as small as two-berth cabins. There are ruined towns and villages in plenty all round, hundreds of them. They are all much alike. In a few months kindly Nature makes the green grass grow through the stones, and the brick and stone mounds lose their soreness, but I have never seen anything like this village. Lift it bodily to London, and it would be the most popular exhibition in the Metropolis.

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Matters are improving here. One of our men whose two sons are in the British Army saw the German artillery bag six French soldiers this morning, and the French in return bring down a German aeroplane, which, he said, collapsed like a shot pheasant.

It is these little incidents which atone for days of dulness.

## THE LAND OF DESOLATION.

I was permitted by our very charming General the other day to go through the trenches here. He came and saw us cooking eggs and eating sardines, using as our table a heap of logs. He was very pleasant, congratulated us on our last Verdun performance, asked after our general comfort, ordered a little hut and table to be erected for our use, and gave us permission to see the lines, perhaps the most perfectly constructed scheme of defence on the Western front. For two years the French and Germans have faced each other in this place without moving, and during that time the French have certainly dug themselves in.

In casques and macintoshes, in spite of the warm day, we tramped and twisted about above and below ground, in trenches and in deep tunnels, up



and down hand-over-hand ladders in perpendicular shafts, through long concrete passages 30 feet underground, down steep and narrow staircases to subterranean sleeping quarters ventilated by pipes leading from the dynamo chamber, in and out of cunningly concealed machine-gun emplacements, through or under fields of rusty barbed wire, with bristling *chevaux de frise* ready to drop to block a passage or a trench, while a machine close at hand poured into it 500 shots a minute. No German aimed at my casque that day, but it saved my head a score of times against those timbers. Gradually we worked forward through the third and second lines right to the listening posts in the land of desolation. We peeped through holes, and the enemy was no doubt peeping at us. Only a few yards, three or four score, divided us. The trees of the forest had disappeared, no grass grew in that region, shells and bombs and torpedoes had churned up the earth over and over again. All was turbulent waste and desolation. Our guide was most obliging, but he didn't keep us there long; he said it was unhealthy, and we believed him.

Now I am writing this on the table the General provided for us, about three-quarters of a mile behind that unholy land, and a German plane up above is awaking the ire of many 75's around. It is pretty to see the plane, glistening in the sun, sailing in and out of the white smoke puffs as if they were sent up for its amusement.

A French friend asked if we would like to go with him in the evening, if there were no wounded, to see the fireworks. We arranged for eight o'clock, but, as it turned out, we had a mildly interesting adventure of our own. Wounded came in, and I started off after daylight without lights on a 15 kilometres run, took the wrong turning in the darkness of the woods, and lost myself.

We slid nicely and gently down a moderate hill, where I expected to find a very steep one, and found ourselves in the middle of an open plain, which was every few seconds illuminated by the flares on either side and apparently in front. It was evident we were near the lines, but where? There was not a soul to be seen. We crept along slowly and silently until we came to a cross road, and then waited. There was no noise, only pretty fireworks.

At last the sound of horses, and a troop of cavalry came along, and we got our bearings. The road we were on is forbidden in daylight, as at one point it is quite near enough to the enemy for his snipers to have good practice, but under the protection of darkness it has the double advantage of being just a little dangerous and sufficiently well lighted by both French and German flares to make driving in the dark a pleasure.

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## RARECOURT.

We have been at Rarecourt eleven weeks.

The cars have left their muddy field and are installed in one of the squares, a few of them with a very convenient downhill run to help them to start on chilly mornings.

There is a fountain in the middle of the square, where, with buckets and brushes and screwdriver and chisels, we clean the cars. Long rubber boots and macintoshes are indispensable for this work. We sleep now in the long-expected barrack—at least those members who have not been fortunate enough to secure rooms. The rain comes through the barrack roof and the wind blows in through a hundred holes. It is an interesting game trying to block up the wind holes and stop the leaks. You find one leak and plug it, and then the water immediately discovers a new hole.

So long as the rain doesn't drop on one's sleeping bag it doesn't matter much, but it is irritating being awakened by drops splashing on to one's face or one's pillow. We have two stoves, which require much attention. Occasionally we get wood rations for nothing; sometimes we cut trees in the forest and bring huge logs down in the place of wounded. Coal can be got at a price—4/- for 112 lbs. if we can get a car to Bar-le-Duc or St. Minehould, or 7/6 locally. That works out at a pretty considerable price a ton.

We were given the bare barrack, and some of us have built little rooms therein, with macintosh sheets enclosing our six feet by nine cubicles, and we have writing desks, washstands, etc., with maps, photos, and the illustrations from "La Vie Parisienne" as decorations. Everything is damp. For those who fear rheumatism, the only course is to sleep in one's underclothes. They are sure to be dry. We can even get hot baths at the military bathing establishment.

We eat in the tent, which has now a floor, and can even sit in it in warm weather. It also has a stove, which eats wood and warms those who sit very near it.

Between the tent and the barrack we have constructed paths of stone, and trenched them on either side. They help to keep us out of the worst mud.

We are doing very little work. About seven cars are on duty every twenty-four hours. Two on alternate days at the local ambulance, where at any time of the day or night they are called upon to transfer sick or wounded to other hospitals or railway centres within a radius of fifteen miles.

At last we have got a room to ourselves there, where we can sit in cold weather, cook our food, and sleep.

Two cars go up every day to Sept Fontaines within half a mile of the Germans; another close to the Maison Forestière.

Three cars are on emergency duty, taking whatever turns up. At Sept Fontaines and the Maison we sleep on stretchers in dug-outs. I don't know whether these places are shell-proof. We haven't had a direct hit yet, but it probably depends upon the calibre of the gun.

Sept Fontaines is occasionally interesting; we are in front of some of the trenches, but these are merely for communication. In the half-mile before the land of desolation the earth is trenched and tunnelled and chambered to a depth of thirty or forty feet. There are long concrete passages and innumerable sleeping rooms all deep down, protected by many metres of solid ground. They are airless and damp. You walk through mud and water to them, and crouch under damp beams down steep, rickety stairs.

The rabbits and the rats live under similar conditions, but they are used to it and made for it. For us it is hideous, ugly, and sordid. One longs in these miserable holes for the pure air and the blessed daylight. The Hun is, I suppose, entrenched in the same way. In the front are the mortars and aerial torpedoes, far back the guns. Neither side moves. They have been there since the battle of the Aisne, and are prepared to stay there for all time apparently.

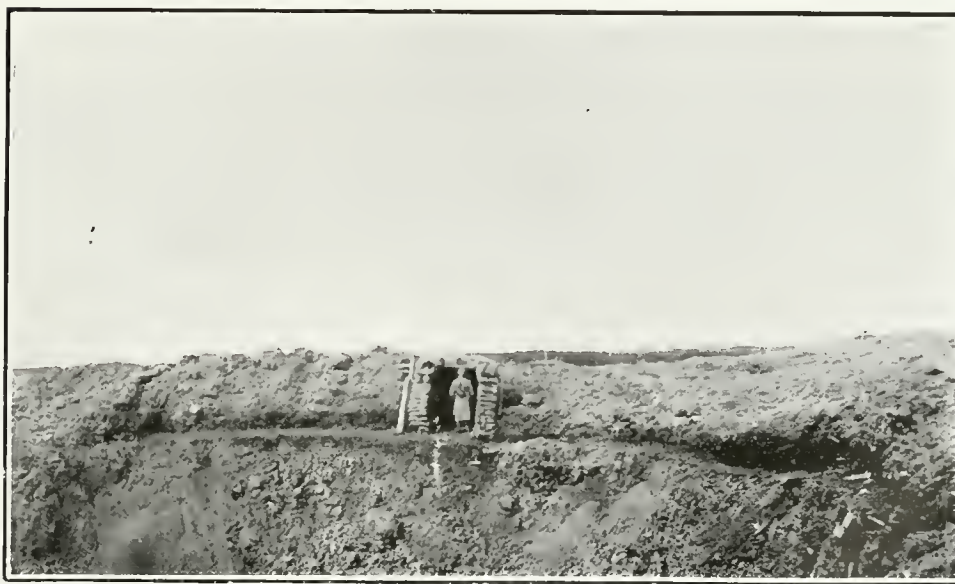
One night when I was up with three other Englishmen, the Boches began bombarding our *Poste de Secours*. Safe in my dug-out I heard the shells scream and burst. One exploded right inside our little *Salle à Manger*, 7 feet square, and blew it to the four winds, and with it some of our belongings. We dug out the base of the 105m. shrapnel buried two feet deep under what was our dining table. Bits of the wooden walls were found leaning up against our cars about 20ft. away, but neither was touched. My sponge bag and my Primus lamp were, alas! hopelessly ruined, and we spent an interesting hour salving other details from the mud.

The French evidently felt that this shell, and another which got the R.C. kitchen the following night, hadn't quite played the game, so for three-quarters of an hour their guns rained shells on the German trenches. They screamed over our heads like the noise of a hurricane through the rigging of a big sailing ship, two hundred or more to the minute. We listened, awed but delighted.

Except for an occasional shrapnel and the falling bullets from anti-aircraft guns we haven't had any fun since, but, alas! our little dining-room has gone never to return.



Luke and the Maison dug-out.



A listening post in the Argonne.





D. L. Oliver.



Maison Forestière.



## MINING.

From the *Postes de Secours* we carry down at all hours of the night or day the sick and wounded. The twelve miles' run to Rarecourt is easy work in the daylight, but at night, in the fogs, on these greasy, heavily cambered roads, with deep ditches on either side, and down steep hills into the valley, it is always more or less a physical strain. Beyond a certain point we are allowed to use our lights, but even an acetylene head light in a fog does not penetrate more than about ten yards. Two cars, fortunately both empty, have already been upset. There are, however, comparatively few wounded. This is a quiet sector, though so near Verdun, and there seems to be something of a mutual understanding—"if you don't worry us we won't worry you."

The chief method of warfare here is mining. One side or the other tunnels under the land of desolation, places many tons of explosives there, and then ignites it electrically. The result is a volcanic disturbance, a new crater is formed, our dug-out shakes, and we are rudely awakened. It is said that the men on the one side have a knack of warning their opponents in return for a similar attention on the other, but the rules of the game seem to be rather complex. The other day I met the French Colonel wearing a broad smile and rubbing his hands. "Yes, we had a good day yesterday," he told me; "we blew up a small mine, and the enemy occupied it. Then we discharged another underneath and got a General, some of his staff, and about sixty men."

But these are rare incidents, and as a rule the lines are tranquil, the guns roar and the shells shriek around, but only in a half-hearted way. Once or twice in the night-time down in the valley we have heard the roar of the Verdun artillery rolling over us, and have wondered why we were not there. Duouamont has fallen to the French, and Vaux been retaken. The Germans are as far from Verdun as they were nine months ago. The convoy knows that district well, and would gladly be back in it again, but, alas! it seems likely to be Rarecourt all the winter. We are having all the discomforts of war and none of the fun. So far not even a car has been seriously hit, though it is rather marvellous how they escaped.

Mine, with myself on it, was in the outside zone of a shrapnel the other day. Bullets splashed all round, digging up the earth, but not a touch on the car.

Do the shrapnel recognise that we are non-combatants and are only there to succour the wounded?

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE EVERLASTING MUD.

It is December 19th, 1916, and we have been at Rarecourt four months. Our barrack is full, and at last we have arranged the two stoves so that they do not smoke us out. For weeks we endured it, and went about sooty, with all our clothes and underclothes sooty, but now the draught goes up the chimney instead of down, and when we can beg, buy, or steal wood we can even get the place warm for an hour or two. Coal has to be bought, in sacks, at 90 fr. a ton, but it chiefly consists of dust and heavy stones.

Our chief enemy is the mud. The hut where we sleep is in a field, and all around it is mud. Sometimes it is convenient to wear long rubber boots, but the difficulty is to keep them on. They are impossible for a full day's work, as the mud jerks convulsively at your heels with every step, and, if you sit down and rest, your feet begin to freeze in five minutes, and they are exceedingly tiring to endure more than for an hour or two even with a thick stocking inside. Most of us wear boots and leather leggings, and some of the most sensible wooden sabots. Sabots are rather in the nature of an acquired art, but they have the merits of being cheap, warm, and easy to shake off.

A long, long time ago we were promised wooden trellis walks from the barrack to the mess tent, and diligently we set to work to prepare for them. We even made preliminary paths of stone collected from all parts of the fields.

But, like many things that have been promised to us, these wooden walks, which one sees at every camp around, have never arrived. We slither about in a sea of mud, bury our feet in it, and drag it all over our sleeping quarters, and curse it all day and every day.

A repair car and three English mechanics "are coming out" to us. We have expected them for five months. Seven members have left us, five because they couldn't "stick it," the others because they were not sufficiently fit physically. It isn't really very easy to stick. A few are on leave, and in consequence the remainder are having more work than usual. Every thirty hours out of forty-eight one is, so to speak, "not at home," often sleeping in a dug-out or in an old barn close up.

After preparing one's car and cleaning oneself there isn't much time left before the next expedition begins.

The French have done another big thing at Verdun, and once again we are not in it. Is it our fate to stay at this damp, dismal little Rarecourt for ever? It would almost seem so. Since the early days of Verdun things have changed very much. The French ambulance convoys are now plentiful and well organised. I am beginning to have a suspicion that we are no longer wanted.

The work we have to do is dull and unimportant. We do it all right, but nobody says "Thank you" or apparently takes any interest in us. The really important things are the football matches, for which we have become famous, and our little racing game, which amuses quite a large section of the convoy two or three times a week.

Oh, yes! we have got the "Croix" on our cars, and several members also on their breasts. I grant that, but it all happened quite a long time ago, and now we are stuck by the heels in the mud at Rarecourt.

\* \* \* \* \*

At 3 a.m. this morning I awoke to listen to the guns. There is one monster somewhere around, and I could hear the whistling of the shells. At seven I crawled out of my sleeping bag to find ice in my basin. With difficulty I cleaned out the stove and lighted the fire with liberal doses of paraffin, and packed up my things for the next twenty-four hours. A cup of hot coffee and some bread and butter and jam in the tent, and then the work of starting up my car after a night's severe frost. A dope or two of "essence" in the cylinders, two or three convulsive coughs, and the engine starts all right. It is always a relief when she takes hold. Then about three-quarters of an hour's run to Brizeaux, passing columns of infantry and convoys of ammunition. Brizeaux is a new hospital about one-twentieth full. There is very little to do there. The car stands idle twenty-two hours out of twenty-four. We have a little room about eight feet square. There is no possibility of a fire. The thermometer shows about 15 degrees of frost. Pleasant, isn't it? What is one to do?

The usual practice is to take a Primus stove and keep oneself not quite cold by its means, and incidentally cook one's meals. We have been promised other quarters. "These are only temporary." I know those promises, and think "temporary" really means for three years or the duration of the war. So! for a chilly night, unwashed and unkempt, and the consciousness that one is doing one's duty. My six months are up on February 21st. Shall I come back?

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#### CAMP DERVIN.

I thought Brizeaux was the limit, but since then I have been to Dervin. It is a post up in the woods. One solitary car finds its way up there by a long roundabout route through villages in the most picturesque state of demolition. Auzèville, with its battered, brown-tiled roofs, and general signs of long and continuous bombardment, is far more picturesque than

even Claremont. It has been bombarded without being destroyed, and its colouring and raggedness are most artistic. All the country around this district is honeycombed with big and little burrows, shelters from the Boche shells. There are great caves near the railway line, and further up thousands of little holes for the human rabbits that abide there.

It has been my fate to sample many kinds of dug-outs, but that at Dervin! A steep, greasy staircase with slimy walls growing narrower and narrower until you can only just squeeze in, and then the apartment! It is about 7ft. long by 5ft. wide. In the left-hand corner is a huge stove with a heap of damp firewood lying around it. This stove takes up about one-fourth of the space. The floor is boarded but exceedingly dirty. Opposite the entrance are two bunks covered with dirty straw. You cannot stand upright without hitting your head against the muddy roof. Water exudes from that roof all day and night in big dirty drops.

There is always a pool of muddy slime in the middle of the room. The rats fight their battles at night-time around that pool. I don't mind the rats, but the noise is disturbing.

I gave my aide the choice of sleeping in the car or the dug-out, there wasn't room for two of us. He wisely chose the car. A thaw had set in and everything was heavy with mud. I had forgotten my pipe, and my Primus lamp refused to work. The under-berth was not quite so damp as the upper one. After many attempts the stove burnt and filled the place with smoke, but anyhow it dried it up a little. Then I slept not badly, disturbed only by the noise of the rats (and rats are very noisy), and by a few German shells singing overhead. But what a life at 2½d. a day.

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Up above that dug-out there is a road, very close to the German trenches—within 70 yards I was told—leading to a little *Poste de Secours*. Our cars can go there only by night.

The trees all around are close cropped by the mitrailleuses. There has been much fighting in this little hole, and war in all its dreadful ugliness has blighted the face of this fair forest, and scarred the landscape like a malicious pestilence. It is all ugly, sordid, and dirty.

Down the side of the hill four men carry a brancard; behind the stretcher walk two soldiers slightly wounded. It is our load for the day. We are lucky in having no night work.

OUR 2½d.

We work here for the Cause; our enthusiasm carries us through, and it is well that enthusiasm exists.

In return for our services—an expenditure of £2 to £3 a week, the whole cost of uniform and kit, and in many cases the free gift of a motor-car—we are allowed to come out here and serve the French Government with the status of privates, and for the magnificent sum of 2½d. a day.

Some of us endeavoured at first in a spirit of princely generosity to refuse that 2½d. We felt that after having spent so much it would be a pity to ruin the effect by accepting that eighteenpence a week. We graciously waived it aside and made a present of it to the French Government. But, alas! our intentions were misunderstood; the officials evidently could not believe we could be so generous. That 2½d. pursued us, reams of letters were written on the subject, the work of the Section stood still; even the organisation threatened to collapse. Mighty and distinguished officials visited us, and we were entreated almost with tears to reconsider the matter. For the time being it was more important than the submarine problem or the attitude of Tino. Eventually we gave way. We had to.

The whole force of the French Administration was opposed to us. After that I remember our officers smiled once more, and the look of anxious depression left the faces of the bureau clerks.

For 2½d. a day and rations, supplemented by our own expenditure of £2 to £3 a week per head, we bind ourselves for six months at a time to work how, when and where the French authorities may determine. We sleep in dirty barns or in dirtier dug-outs, in a wooden barrack so constructed as to afford us the maximum of air and dampness with the minimum of warmth. Like ducks we waddle in the mud, spreading it over our sleeping quarters and mess tent. We are always cold and very often wet. We work night and day, often under shell fire, and sometimes under very difficult conditions.

Nobody shirks, very rarely is anyone late, and cars are not the most tractable of starters. It matters not at all if our officers are there or not. The work is done for the Cause.

In London the organisation that engages us gets our names to a contract and sends us out, seems then to entirely wash its hands of us, provided only that it gets our cars and we do not get into trouble with the French Administration.

If that happens it is most regrettable, most regrettable. Above all, no friction; right or wrong, friction is to be avoided. Do whatever we are told. Never protest. Any senior officer can drive and, possibly, wreck our cars. He may never have driven before, but to object would be to create friction, and friction is horrid.

It has gradually been borne in upon us that we must never look to London for any help in difficulties, and so we have learnt to help ourselves.



For the two long years the convoy has been working, never once have the people responsible for us come out. And how we have longed for them. A night or two in the dug-out at Camp Dervin! Just a week of our winter conditions. Alas! they are too busy, and so new men continue to join unprovided with the details they most need, and many of them say quite rude things in consequence. We get seven days' leave every three months, and fifteen every six if we wish to stay on.

It is strange that people do wish to stay on. In spite of the peculiar ways of the committee, and the somewhat rotten organisation here, they stay. It is not for the comfort, or the pay, or the encouragement and consideration in London, or even at the front; it is not for the glory of war, for all the glamour has long since worn off. It is for the Cause, the Cause alone.

It is something to have given freely of one's means, to have given all one's time, to have shared in the privations of the ordinary soldier, to have endured the often excessive strain of driving in the absolute blackness of night, to have faced shell fire innumerable times and almost learnt to like it. It is something to have been unable to sleep because one's feet were so bitterly cold, to have to thaw one's hands to get back the feeling of touch, to have covered oneself repeatedly with oil and grease.

It is something to have carried a good many thousands of wounded or sick long or short journeys to hospitals.

It is good to have gone through it all, to have seen the rottenness of some things, the glaring stupidity and flabby incompetence of others, and to have stuck to it contented, occasionally almost happy even.

The truth is the Cause is good, and the workers are necessarily of the right sort. They understand and appreciate each other and each other's work, so they endure and go on.

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## THE WINTER OF 1916-17.

Twenty degrees of frost, my hands numb, with no feeling in the fingers, my feet painfully cold, wrapped up to the eyes, driving an ambulance car without a screen through a blizzard of freezing east wind and fine driving snow. Phew! the end of January was cold. Our barracks let all the breezes through. At 3 a.m. it was too cold to sleep. One would have been just as warm outside. I had one long day just before we moved evacuating from Rarecourt. We had seven or eight journeys, and got frozen on each. If we were away more than an hour or so our stove went out. I find cold

accumulates. After a day of this kind one needs not only to warm oneself, but to soak in warmth for an hour or two until it penetrates to the bones. We ran about 240 kilometres that day, and carried 29 cases, and to finish up were called out just after a late home-made dinner to tow a broken-down car back to Rarecourt. Then we ran short of petrol for the second time.

On the 27th of January we moved, and glad we were to say good-bye to the mud and cold and dull days of Rarecourt. We were going to Glorieux, a suburb of Verdun. Hurrah! we were all of us delighted. It may mean hard work, but it is what we came out for.

\* \* \* \* \*

### VERDUN.

The frost continues, but the sun shines, and we are having a few days' repose.

Alas! no work. I have been all over Verdun with my camera. The city is practically uninhabited, and half in ruins, but it has not been demolished, and the ruins are picturesque. The cathedral, never a beautiful building, has been damaged, but not irreparably, its two towers stand untouched, and all the structural works appear to be whole.

One or two corners of the city have suffered severely, and tier after tier of half-demolished houses, with, in some cases, just enough standing to support their roofs, present a very interesting picture. I saw in the distance our old haunts in the early days of the German attack, when shells were not only continually falling in Verdun itself but in all the district around within a radius of five miles. Things seem very quiet now. The French guns are often busy, but so far there has been little or no German response. I doubt whether Verdun itself will suffer much more. The Boches, in their usual way, when they found they could not take the place, did their level best to ruin it. They hated it cordially for several days with many big guns. Now they are a mile or so further away, and the offensive has changed very successfully to the French.

### STILL WAITING.

Alas! we have been at Verdun for four weeks, very cold weeks, with the thermometer ranging from 20 to 40.5 degrees Fahr. of frost. Happily for us, but also to our disappointment, we have been doing nothing. Our cars, with the exception of two or three a day, have stood with radiators empty and oil congealed. Nearly all the work here is done at night, and it is lucky not only for us but for our busses that there is very little doing. It is the weather of a hard winter at St. Moritz, with brilliant sunshine in the

day, but too often with a bitter piercing east wind. One day when I ran back to Revigny my radiator froze on the way. Imagine waiting at a *Poste de Secours* under these conditions. The difficulty of keeping oneself from freezing stiff, to say nothing of the complications that may happen to the car! We have made our barracks at Glorieux warm and comfortable. We are more or less content, but there is nothing to do. Once or twice we have wandered into forbidden spots, and been politely but firmly arrested. On two or three occasions the guns have suddenly begun to talk, and we have climbed the hill beyond to watch the fireworks. Every night the Germans send a few shells over us, and now and then into Verdun. This is our only relaxation. We are waiting for the ball to begin. Personally, I shall have waited my six months in another ten days, and, if nothing lifts us out of our peaceful repose, it will be a case of "Home, sweet home." It is interesting to see Verdun again, and to take photos where one likes, but one might as well be, bar the cold, at the Riviera.

No, we had very little to do at Verdun. Our only excitement was the occasional whistle of a shell over us at night. To me it was interesting because I knew those shells must have come from at least seven miles away. Their objective was the road about 800 yards off. Now a mistake of 800 yards in seven miles isn't much, but it might have meant a good deal to us, so it is with great pleasure I give a testimonial to the German gunners for the consistency of their long-range fire—not a single shell over our quarters fell short.

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## THE POILU.

France is happy in her soldiers. The more I see of them the more I admire them. They are not smart, but they are business-like, and wonderfully patient. You should see the conditions under which they live. If any of our Tommies are inclined to grumble they should take a month with the French. For 2½d. a day and the scantiest of separation allowances—2.50fr. per day in the towns, with 50c. for each child; in the country the daily allowance is cut down to 1.50fr. a day—living in shelters with the absolute minimum of comfort, fairly well fed according to their standard, but always adding, if possible, from their meagre allowance to their daily rations; able to keep themselves moderately clean with only the greatest difficulty and perseverance; well disciplined and obedient, cautious but with a marvellous spirit of courage in their fighting, facing any odds when they have confidence in their leaders, with the knowledge that this war has brought home to them that, man for man, they can afford heartily to despise the Germans, the French soldiers are patient, enduring and brilliant. Their officers are proud



E. F. King.



Bar-le-Duc -- not Venice.



At Blercourt.



OUR MARRAINE.



Madame la Comtesse de Pourtalès, an English lady  
who sent us many good things from Paris.



of them, as well they may. The British are born soldiers, and so are the French. The Germans are wonderful machines.

Given the same war administration, the careful preparation, and minute thought and efficient Staff, there can be no comparison between the personal average fighting qualities of the two opposing armies.

As to administration, our own and the French have improved out of all recognition in the last two years.

The officers of the French army are as well or better paid than ours, but there are far too many in the higher ranks. There are hundreds of generals, whose use has departed since the telephone and wireless allowed the Army Commander to communicate direct and at once with his Divisional Generals.

XMAS, 1916.

I do not know what the war may yet have in store for us, but France will gain no greater military honour than will be for ever associated with the name of Verdun.

We—S.S.A. No. 10—the collection of over-age and crocky Englishmen—have been with the Verdun army since the fourth or fifth day of the German assault. Then we were not at all sure whether we were to be taken prisoners or not, and very proud we are to have been even in our humble capacity associated with the great Second Army.

Verdun we know inside and out, Fort Tavanne, Maison Forestière, and the Bellevue Farm long since in ruins, the Verdun Place where the Germans daily dropped shells while our cars waited there, the shell-swept road to Bras. We know them by day and night, and shall never forget them.

Now on this Christmas Day of 1916, when Germany is flying peace kites, and is over-running little Rumania, while England, France, Russia, and Italy are preparing their great offensive, the spectre of which Prussian militarism sees looming out of the early days of 1917—now that peace—our peace—has become, thanks to Verdun and the Somme, a matter, we hope, of months and not of years, our little convoy is undeniably glad that it has seen something of the war, and acquitted itself fairly well after its long, long weary months of hospital work and waiting.

### MORE DERVIN.

We call Camp Dervin "Hell." Not because of the fireworks, but on account of our truly miserable conditions there.

On New Year's Day, my friend and I volunteered for twenty-four hours' service so as to give the French aides a holiday. We were sent to Dervin. With an ample stock of provisions and some cheap champagne

we started off at the very reasonable hour of 10 a.m. Ran through Auzeville, past the German prisoners working on the quarry near Vraincourt, by the ruins of Aubreville, up the hill to our dirty, disreputable little camp. On the way we picked up a French officer returning from permission. I introduced my companion to the *abri*, and after inspection we decided to leave our things in a dry corner there, if we could find one, and spend the day and cook our meals in the car. It was, of course, raining; it always rains gently all day; this accounts for the mud. If it rained any harder some of the mud might get washed away, so the Argonne Clerk of the Weather, who loves mud, regulates the allowance of water accordingly.

But the weather was warm, so it was no privation to stay out in the open.

About 11.30 we heard the car was wanted. "Had we lunched?" We hadn't, but we made haste and opened a tin of most delightful pate which my friend had brought from Paris, a bottle of champagne, coffee, bread and butter, and honey.

No wonder the sun seemed to come out afterwards. Of course it only seemed. It was a pleasant trip down to the hospital and back, a matter of two hours.

About two o'clock we started to walk round by the road to the *Poste de Secours* which we might have to visit. As it turned out we were wise. It is as well to know your road in the day-time before trying it in the dark without lights, and no traffic is allowed on these three kilometres in daylight. Our walk took us through the wood round three sides of a square. The woods were absolutely miserable. A few badly-gashed oaks still stood dignified and majestic, but all around the smaller trees were chopped off short, their ragged tops lying in a mass of tangled undergrowth.

It was pitiful and pathetic. There must have been a hurricane of shot and shell through that unhappy Forest of Hesse. All the smaller trees are cut in half. The oaks still stand plugged with bullets and bleeding from ragged shell wounds. Around, mixed up with the débris, are the holes of the human rats who live, or lived, there, with tangles of rusty barbed wire and *chevaux de frise* adding to the general ugliness.

On our stretch of the road a notice was posted asking us to walk in the ditch, as the Germans could see the centre, and in the ditch the bank protected us to some extent.

The ditch was full of water. The day was misty, so we stuck to the road and chanced it. But quite a lot of people do get killed on that road. The enemy has a mitrailleuse and a few snipers "on" it, I should not like to say how close. Deep shell holes just off the centre told us we should

have to be careful if we had to pass anything in the dark. The holes in the road are made good at once, but it is only the narrow track that is left open; on either side there are little caverns full of water.

We walked back through the woods over the crest of a long and steep hill, and down the muddy track at the other side.

No wonder it is customary to send eight men to carry a stretcher case over that path, and equally no wonder the *blessés*, if they can wait, prefer to be fetched by night by the motor ambulance.

We had no sooner got back to our car when we heard we should be wanted at six o'clock. We cleared the ambulance of our belongings and made a hurried tea in the *abri*.

It was New Year's Day, and all the French soldiers were happy and full of patriotism and *pinard*. Two men asked if they could come down with us to fill their flasks and we took them.

We had no difficulties on our first run. The night was dark, but the roads were rivers of mud, and it was almost as easy as daylight driving. When one sentry stopped us and ordered us to put on our lights we protested it was unnecessary, but he would have it. At the hospital we waited twenty minutes to find the Major—it was New Year's Day—and at Solvange, where we eventually landed our wounded, they suggested we should kindly not bring them any more that night; we said we would do our best.

We got back to the camp and dined at 9 o'clock, and then fixed up our two stretchers, unrolled our sleeping bags, and went to sleep in the car. But, alas! not for long. I heard a swish-bang, and realised that the new day had come, and with it the German shells. "What was that?" said a voice above me. "A German shell," I replied. Another minute, and then another swish-bang. I have heard a good many Boche shells, and I realised those didn't swish long enough to be pleasant. The nearer to you shells burst the less you hear the swish and the more you hear the bang. With the third, we could hear the twigs dropping from the trees around.

"Damn! I suppose we must go into that infernal *abri*. You are on top and will get a bullet first," I said. "I shall be safe. What do you think?" While we were thinking another one came and decided the matter, and we got sleepily into each other's boots and carried our bedding into that dirty, damp, rat-infested *cagna*. Having disturbed us, the shells most unkindly stopped.

By the light of a candle I watched a big rat running about the wicker-work roof. I did not call my companion's attention to it; he does not like rats, and it was within a foot and a half of his head. Another was busy

trying to gnaw through the planks; two more came in and had a personal dispute about some trifling matter on the floor.

I did not sleep. There is a damp, musty smell about the place that makes one sick.

At 3 a.m. we were called out. The phosphorescent light had gone from the roads, and it was with considerable difficulty that we made our way to our post. Every now and then I got out and walked to find the road, and several times we pulled up for horse waggons with *revitaillment* and surveyed the road to see if we could safely pass.

While waiting at the *Poste* the shells began to fall again on the road that we had come along.

We filled up with four cases, and very slowly started off again. About half a mile away we heard a bang close behind us. Nothing else happened, except that we ran short of petrol—we always started out with full tanks—and had to fill up from our reservoir on the road.

While doing this I carelessly dropped our only electric torch, and we had to finish by lamp light. We delivered this man also at Solvange without apology. It was nearly 8 a.m. when we got back, dirty and tired.

Breakfast, thanks to our Primus lamp, a little oiling up of the car, and then off again with a load home. At noon we were finished. We filled up with petrol and left the dirty car for the day—we had been on it for twelve hours, and didn't want to see it again—and spent our afternoon sleeping, washing, and generally cleaning up. The latter process takes quite a long time when one has to do everything oneself.

Some day we may have a possible shelter built for us.

The place is beastly at present. The man who relieved us had absolutely nothing to do, but it was better, I think, to be working hard than to be trying to sleep in that unspeakable dug-out.

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## ON LEAVE.

England is beginning to realise the war. I had a fortnight at home in March, 1917. The atmosphere was more dismal than I had ever known it. Everybody was busy. There were the usual amount of immaculately dressed soldiers around London, many of them wearing those spurs to which H. G. Wells objects so strongly. The country was full of troops and munitions. News came of the German retreat on the Somme and the brilliant affair at Bagdad, but perhaps it was the Dardanelles Report, perhaps the scarcity of potatoes—in any case England was very serious for

the first time. I could not help wondering if food really became scarce how the people would stand it. Will the country squeal, or will it imitate the fortitude of the Germans or French? I fear England will squeal. She has not known war or had effects of war at home for very many generations. Yet slowly and tediously everything is going well. The Zeppelin is a failure. We were wise not to attempt to imitate the Boche in the construction of these unwieldy, unreliable and very delicate monsters in spite of the strenuous efforts of a section of the Press to persuade us otherwise. The submarine has done its worst, and though it is a nuisance, we know the extent of its powers, and it is no longer a nightmare. It is necessary to be careful of our food supply, to work hard at munitions, and to wait. Everything goes well. It is not all fun for the submarines, far from it. Slowly but surely the end draws near. Then why this gloom in England? Is the country getting tired of the war? Imagine how weary they are in Germany, and how "fed-up" in France. It is certainly far more cheerful at the front, where, amid the ruined villages, the mud and discomfort, and months of forced inaction, life is somehow endurable.

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#### A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY.

It is a weary journey from England to the French front. The boat may or may not sail from Southampton. One must be prepared to be held up doing nothing for days. I was lucky on my leave, and all went well. There were no long waits, except that inevitable and very tedious hour and a half standing in a queue to pass the passport authorities. It is always a weary business, and has to be faced twice—once on each side of the Channel. Our baggage is examined both at Southampton and Havre, and at the French side the train service is so arranged that one just misses the 7.30 a.m. to Paris, and has to wait all day. At Paris, taxis are few and far between, and the driver charges what he likes. One of them asked me five francs to go about half a mile. I told him to go to another place, and took a growler.

The train from Paris east is crowded, so that half the people have to stand. It is a four or six hours' run to Bar-le-Duc.

Having persuaded a kindly official to telegraph that three of us were arriving, I fondly hoped we should find some kind of a car to meet us. But, alas! there was nothing. So we searched for the proper bureau at which to report, spent the night at Bar, and left next day with our baggage for a circuitous run in a postal *camion*. The day was fine, and the journey not more than four to five hours.

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## BLERCOURT.

I found the convoy at Blercourt serving Hill 272 and the side near Marre. There was not much doing, but a big bombardment started within an hour of my arrival, and continued all day and most of the night, and news came in of the taking of Bapaume and a general advance all along the line. It is evident that though we, the convoy, may not be doing much now, we can expect to be busy soon. In the meantime we go "up" when we are wanted, and serve for forty-eight hours, and when off duty lead a peaceful life out of danger.

## MARRE.

Within twenty-four hours of my arrival I was on duty for two days at Fromereville, in the usual dirty quarters, with a stove that would not burn. We were called out at midnight in total darkness, and threaded our way through narrow roads past Marne on to the ruins of Marre. The journey took nearly two hours, much of it at a walking pace. At Marre I got down and walked in front to give my friend the line, and straightaway fell into a hole about four feet deep. It gave me a nasty shake up, but there was no damage done. Later on I was trying to point out this man-trap to my fellow *conducteur* when he also fell into it, so we were all square. The hole wasn't formed legitimately by any shell, but was probably the broken roof of an arched cellar.

There is a *Poste de Secours* at Marre buried in the ground. The French front trench is fifty yards away, the German about 800. The doctors and stretcher-bearers at Marre are not allowed to show themselves at all in the daylight. The whole place is open and exposed to German rifle fire. It must be a dull life hiding all day underground. A short time ago a car ran into the ditch in the darkness and had to be left there. The next day the enemy amused themselves by shelling it to bits. Rather luckily for us we were kept at Marre until 3.30 a.m. waiting for an additional case, which had to be brought three kilometres along the road. It was raining in torrents, and the darkness was almost impenetrable. Cold and wet, we joined the wounded lying round a fire, and were glad to get a little warmth in exchange for a few cigarettes. On the way home, keeping on the road with difficulty, and rolling in and out of shell holes, I tried to solve the problem of what we should do with our wounded if the car broke down. We should have to remove them to a place of safety while the car was left to take its chance. The difficulty would be to find the place of safety. Happily the engine stuck to its work, and about 4.30 the first sign of the new day—a day of snow blizzards—arrived, and we could see to move. We discharged

at 5 a.m. at Fromereville, and two hours later were sent with five *couches* and three *assis* to the evacuation hospital, about an hour away. Back to Fromereville again at 8, and to bed, while outside a north-west blizzard blew. My sleeping bag was the only warm place I could find that day, and, with short intervals for meals, I was allowed to stay in it. But, alas! I have got a dreadful cold in my head, the penalty of a fortnight at home in warm houses.

\* \* \* \* \*

Spring commenced yesterday, March 21st, according to the calendar. It made a bad start—ice and snow. I shivered with cold waves running down my back, and sneezed my head off. It is a mistake to go on leave and live in warm houses, and yet after six months of this life of dirt and discomfort one longs to see again, if only for a short time, a cosy, comfortable room with a warm fire, cleanliness, comfort, and hot water. The joy of being able to get hot water by merely turning a tap at any moment of the day or night! The pleasure of sitting in a clean, cosy room in front of a fire! And one pays for one's leave by going more or less sick on rejoining. Happily I haven't had enough to miss duty. For over eighteen months I have lived with the convoy, and so far I have never yet missed my "service." The warm weather must come soon. Spring here has a three weeks' start of England, and in April last the temperature was quite summer-like.

#### VADELAINCOURT.

Vadelaincourt has grown out of all recognition. I delivered four cases there, and didn't recognise the place. A railway line runs through, and all the canvas hospital sheds have given place to well-built wooden huts. The site of the hospital has been moved from the muddy swamp, in which I first found it, to the side of the hill.

In the early days of the war I used to marvel at the places chosen as sites for hospitals. Many of them were either at the top of steep hills, up which it was almost impossible in wet weather to drive a car, or in muddy swamps, liable to be flooded. Things have altered for the better very much since then, but what, I wonder, has become of the people who originally chose the sites?

\* \* \* \* \*

A member of our convoy waited an hour at Fromereville at 5 a.m. while one of his wounded was decorated. A young Frenchman, hardly twenty years of age, was in charge of a machine-gun in or near the front

trench. Four Germans attacked him in succession. The first wounded him through the hand with a bayonet thrust, and was promptly shot. The second was unfortunate, as his rifle jammed, the cartridge exploded, but no bullet arrived. He was settled with the bayonet. Another appeared and met the same fate. The fourth put up his hands, cried "*Camarade*," and said he was the father of a family. His family is now fatherless. When our Medecine Principal heard the story he hurried the boy off to the General, who promptly pinned to his coat the Croix de Guerre.

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## THE U.S. WITH US.

APRIL 3RD.

Hurrah! The great American nation has come in at last! I like the President's speech:—

"We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest and no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves and no material compensation for sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind, and shall be satisfied when these rights are as secure as fact and the freedom of nations can make them.

"Civilisation itself seems to be in the balance; but right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for the universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as will bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

"To such a task we can dedicate our lives, our fortunes, everything we are, everything we have, with the pride of those who know the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and might for the principles that gave her birth, and the happiness and peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other."

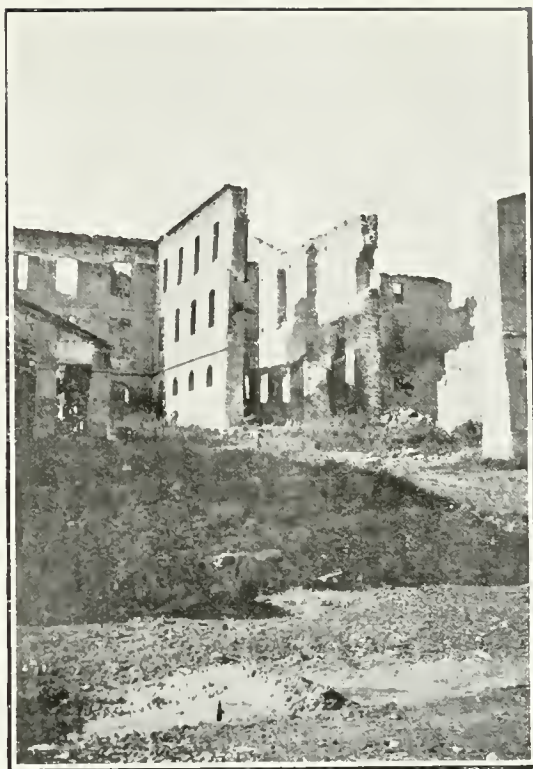
Has ever a great country been called to war on grounds so ideal?

That is the right tone. It really is "great," and will live in history. One can imagine the extent of the war fever in New York. Here the French are pleased. "A little late," they say, "but at last!" The moral effect will be enormous.

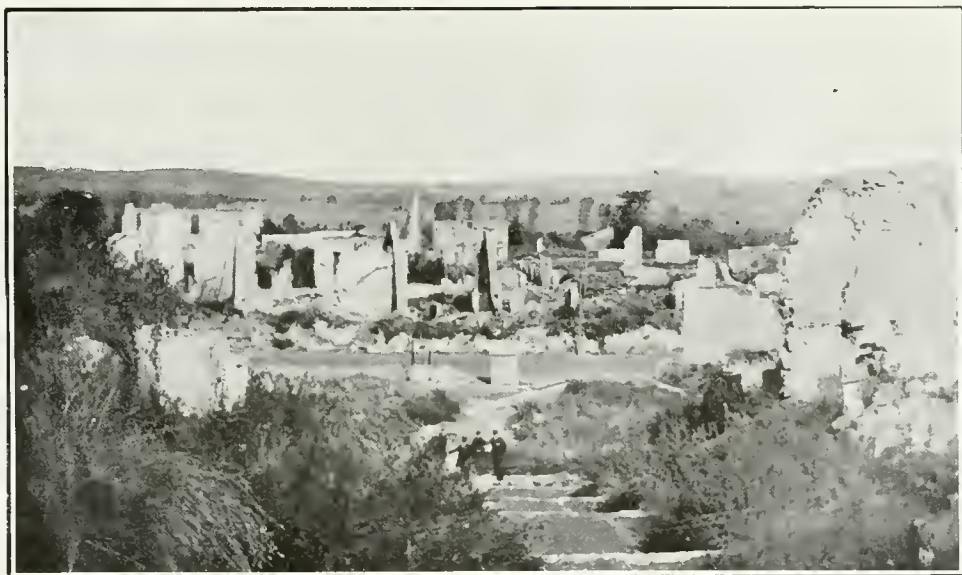
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A little thin on the top.



An unsteady corner.



Claremont from the hill.





Spring Rice on the Bras Road.



The wood-cutters — Glorieux.



The Place des Armes.



On Easter Sunday we played a football match. A band played, the sun shone, and within five miles of the lines a few hundred spectators assembled to watch the fun. The game was fast and furious, and it ended, owing mainly to the extraordinary bad shooting of the French forwards, at 6—5 in our favour, but the referee diplomatically gave it a draw at 4 all. That was a detail. What interested me was the fact that five young Americans from an ambulance convoy at Glorieux came over and helped us. Mere boys they were, and full of enthusiasm for the war. I talked to them, and was more than pleased with their keenness. There are a good many hundreds of them around here. Youths from the American Universities who rough it up at the front with Ford ambulances and and thoroughly enjoy the life. "What do you think of America coming in?" they inquired. I told them we were all delighted, and there was no doubt they were. One meets them on the road every day, and they greet us as comrades, and are all smiles.

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There are twenty-four hours in the day here, and one knows all of them. Day and night are pretty well alike in war, only I prefer the daylight, though in it so many things are absolutely forbidden. I have just been out on forty-eight hours' duty at a field hospital. The first day my car was wanted at three o'clock in the afternoon, and ran steadily till 10 p.m., evacuating thirty-five cases to railway centres. I slept from 10.30 to 8.0 with little interruptions, such as when my stretcher supports gave way and landed me on the floor, and when the nearest case sat up and falked feverishly. Worked all the next day, with an hour or two to attend to the car and get some food. No time to clean myself except a casual wash in a dirty brook. Turned in again at 9.30 and was called at 1 a.m. and worked for four hours. The moon was kind. Then sleep in an uproar of arriving wounded. More journeys and two burst tyres and back to headquarters again to clean up, replace the two damaged spares, refill with essence—I had travelled nearly 300 kilometres—and generally settle down. I reported a broken brake rod, a coughing carburettor, the two burst tyres, and a consumption of 90 litres of essence. It doesn't seem very economical running, about nine miles to the gallon, but then the roads are not like that from London to Bath. I think I have seen more sun rises in my eighteen months here than in all the rest of my life before.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blercourt ! We have been seven weeks at Blercourt with little to do. The convoy is about forty Englishmen strong, and the English mechanics are gradually overhauling the cars, but these same cars are idle four days out of five. Our Division is in the trenches, but there is nothing happening. Verdun seems to have become a backwater of the war. One can see it from a high hill here just as one can see Mort Homme, Pepper Hill, and all the great historical battlegrounds of Verdun; but except a little occasional desultory shelling there is nothing going on, and little to do. The sun has at last begun to shine, and the dust re-appeared. Every four days or so there is a turn for duty, but it is dull. News comes of the great battle in the north, but here the war is as dead as it can be. I watched the other day the Germans dropping shells—big black smoke shells—into Bois Bourru, where two days before three of us had taken a walk. It looked very unhealthy. The bombardment continued for four hours. The wood was full of guns. We have a little post about half a mile away. It looked, at least, as if our men on duty would be busy that night. But only one case came down, and it had nothing to do with the Boche shells. An officer had stepped upon a hand grenade, and very seriously damaged himself. To-day I am at our divisional clearing hospital, and have been out once for three-quarters of an hour. It is difficult to stay out here and do nothing. We would all so willingly be "in it" under any conditions. Our only excitements are the papers, letters, and meals. We are now comfortable but most exceedingly dull, and want work. Shall we ever get it ?

### THE SUMMER.

The winter went suddenly and summer came. There was no spring. We have been revelling in really hot weather, and now all the trees are in leaf, the woods carpeted with wild flowers, and the nightingales in full song. To realise what the change means to us is impossible to anyone who has not tried our winter conditions. To be warm, comfortably warm, always, and without an effort ! We think of the horrors of Rarecourt as a hideous dream.

Aeroplanes entertain us every day. The air is full of exploding shells, but the planes still sail on unaffected. A few nights ago a few Boche planes sailed around dropping bombs; none came our way fortunately, but we heard the explosions without any trouble, and we shaded very quickly our lights. Happily the district is a big one, and it is one chance in many thousands against a bomb dropped in the dark doing any harm.

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An old English General has just visited and inspected us, and said nice things to us. And he has also brought equally complimentary remarks from our Army Corps General, who says he is very pleased with our work and proud of us generally. So we are all walking about one inch higher than usual, and thinking that we are remarkably fine fellows. Life has its compensations, and little bits of appreciation like this atone not for the periods of hard work, which bring their own reward, but for the long, long weeks of waiting, and the enforced idleness, which is the hardest thing to bear.

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#### TO A FINISH.

New men are still coming to us. We have twenty-three real live ambulance cars, two touring cars, a workshop car, a light *Camion*, and, for as you may have discovered, we must eat, a travelling kitchen. We have cleaned and painted our cars, pul'ed them to pieces, and put them together again, and are ready for anything that may come. The news is good. Another 5,000 prisoners to-day by the French, and our own men proving themselves irresistible in the north. Nearly 50,000 prisoners in two or three weeks, the impregnable Hindenburg line in danger, and the German reserves gradually being wiped out. What food for the German glycerine industry! Let them fight to a finish. The Hun must be killed or left powerless, no matter what it may cost. One's life doesn't matter; finance does not count. The call has come to this generation to die, if necessary, and to face financial ruin without complaint, in the work of killing off the dreadful Huns for the benefit of posterity. Wives must lose their husbands, fathers their sons. The cost must not be counted, but the work done, and completely done. Do not call for an incomplete peace, you people at home. Complete victory is the only solution, no matter what it cost. Come over here, and see what this war means. Visit Belgium and study German methods. The German superman, who knows not God or devil, is an impossibility. The blessed Fatherland that bred him has to be invaded, and the beast killed. This is war, and in this war nothing else matters. Nothing must be allowed to count but victory. The party politician, the professional pacifist, is not yet dead at home. Alas! I am afraid they never will die. But the vast majority of our people are beginning to realise the task before them, and to understand their duty. Germany has become an abomination in the eyes of the world. It is a privilege to be allowed to die in helping to kill the monster, an obligation to willingly offer our sons. We must pay the price willingly and fully. It is the great game, the great sacrifice, and thank Heaven we understand it.

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For two months we have basked in the most delightful summer weather, taking our ease. There is practically nothing to do. It is a demoralising life of laziness. About 1 hour's work a day per head on an average. We seem to have taken root at Blercourt. As a convoy we are very flourishing, both in men and cars, but extraordinarily idle. Early in the morning, about 5.30 a.m., and at tea time each day, the Boche plane comes over and is shot at. He keeps so high that it is difficult to pick him out among the little black and white puffs that mark more or less the line of his flight. Two of them have not got back lately. The French have got a new anti-aircraft gun.

I have at last seen two or three fights in the air. The sound of the mitrailleuse travels very easily. A tiny "pop-pop-pop" comes from the blue sky miles up: at last you see two little planes manœuvring very gracefully around each other. Suddenly one falls like an autumn leaf. You hold your breath momentarily. It seems so awful that the machine should crash to the ground from that amazing height. You feel sick. But it is nothing—merely a manœuvre. Air warfare now involves all the tricks that three years ago astonished and amused the public. To loop over or under an opponent is absolutely necessary. To fall like a dead leaf is often the quickest way of getting out of difficulties. A perpendicular nose dive is nothing; the "pop-pop-pop" goes on. The planes rise high into the thin clouds and disappear over the lines. Sometimes there are two opponents; sometimes five or six. Sometimes the Germans are shooting at one end and the French at the other, and as they are both rapidly changing their positions the result is a general mix-up.

Yesterday, on their way home from duty, two friendly planes entertained us. They looped and looped over and under each other, nose dived and side slid, and withered-leafed for fifteen minutes, gradually dropping lower and lower until the hill between us and their aerodrome shut them out. It was beautiful. 'Tis well to be young enough to fly.

I saw and heard a great explosion yesterday. A munition dump, for some reason or other, caught fire. It happened about three miles away from our camp. The first shock was terrific, like a hundred big shells bursting at once. The weather was exceedingly warm, and as I thought that the explosions would soon be over I remained on my bed. "The Germans are bombarding," said someone. "Good God!" I said, "if that is a new German shell we had better move back twenty miles." It wasn't soon over. The bangs continued, and a huge cloud of white smoke rose, blotting out the East. After a quarter of an hour or so, I could lie still no longer, and made haste to climb the hill, where I found four or five of our men sitting watching. The fire appeared to be dying down, but suddenly a new section

of the dump caught, and with a mighty bang a great red flame shot into the air. A column of smoke, 600 feet high, followed the flame, and in that smoke thousands of little explosions reverberated, and the ground trembled. We were sitting at least a mile away, but the blast of air hit us very hard. From the black smoke shot star shells like sprays of water, and on the fields around appeared little white explosions. I was amazed: it was the biggest fire I have ever seen or am likely to see, and I shall never forget it, but why it came I know not.

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JULY, 1917.

Two events of interest have happened. First and foremost, a member of the London Committee has been out to see us. He gave the convoy a few minutes of his time, expressed himself highly satisfied with all he saw, visited Fromereville and Verdun, and disappeared.

Of, comparatively speaking, more importance is the fact that the Germans made a push on the Mort Homme and 304, to our left, and that all the cars were out for forty-eight hours busily assisting the American ambulance at Dombasle to evacuate wounded. Our cars carried, in one way or another, 1,200 cases.

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We have moved to a peaceful spot and a very idle life miles and miles from the front, and are once again hidden under the trees in the pretty park of a minute chateau. A river flows through the grounds, and many members of the convoy diligently fish for trout, of which there are none. The fish of that stream have long since been killed by means of dynamite cartridges and bombs, but none the less the patient fishermen still wield their fly rods, and only yesterday one of them returned radiant with success—he had had a bite! This is the best record so far.

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Our Commandant, the English Chef de Section, has left us after two years' service, in which his life has by no means always been a happy one. What with an honorary Captaincy based on no solid foundation, a control shared, or at any moment completely ignored by the French lieutenant, over some forty Englishmen ranging in age from 17 to nearly 60, the difficulties of satisfying (1) the French, (2) the London Committee, (3) the Convoy, at one and the same time; the worry of trying to disentangle opposing English and French regulations, both equally binding, to have



endured it for two years, says much for the tact and equanimity of our late Chief. He got his Croix with one or two palms, and he certainly deserved it. During his two years of office he has seen nearly eighty men pass through the Convoy, and these eighty Englishmen have between them moved no less than 30,000 wounded or sick without mishap. It is a record of which he and the Convoy with him may well be proud.

The Committee member who saw us at dinner for three minutes has written a letter in which he places on record "That from my own inspection and from all the reports we have received, the work of the Convoy has of late reached a high degree of excellence." So all is well.

AUGUST 1ST.

The news has come in that we are at last going to do some important work—short but sweet.

AUGUST 14TH.

We are "up" at last! We arrived three days ago, and were shown the side of a hill with trees and nothing else on it for our camp. The authorities seem to think we don't require anything else. We are doing our best, but when it rains! Our cars are covered with branches, our tents—some of us have tents though we were told we should not want them—are hidden in the wood. Every day, and sometimes twice a day, a thunderstorm comes along and soaks us. Regularly, every morning and at night, the Boche sends a few shells screaming over our heads. Down below, in the valley, they are building a barbed wire enclosure for the prisoners that are to come in—a pleasant and hopeful anticipation of events! Our cars are all in order, we know the roads, and are only waiting for the fun to commence.

Last night, the guns around Avoucourt, to our left, had a concert of their own. Our guns have not yet spoken: they have crept into their places in the dark and are lying low and saying nothing. No inquisitive Boche plane has been allowed to come over and inspect them. There are a terrible lot of them, big and small. The Foreign Legion and the Moroccans are here. Soon all these guns will begin their music and will keep at it night and day for seven or eight days, and then the shock troops will go forward, and Mort Homme and 304 will be entirely French once more and the Boche moved back a couple of miles. The attack is to be on a front of eighteen kilometres, and the French are quite confident it will be a success. Certainly there are enough guns here to do the job thoroughly. I am waiting anxiously to hear them all talk.

Our work won't really begin until the infantry move forward, and then we shall be driving night and day without ceasing until the affair is over.

There is a little post on the side of hill 273. It is our objective. We have, some of us, visited it before, in, comparatively speaking, peace times. The road, as it goes further and further up, narrows, and is in places very soft. Shell holes of no mean size appear in it. There are batteries of French guns close at hand, and in trying to find these the enemy plays havoc with the road. Already one of our cars has spent an uncomfortable four hours in a hole there. It was full of water, the night was dark, and he had no lights. How could he know it was four feet deep? So in he went and there he stayed. He tried to bale out the water, only to find there was a small river filling it up much faster than he could empty it. There was nothing to do but unload the wounded and wait for help. The gunners near at hand came to his assistance, and at last he arrived like a drowned rat minus his jack, which he had lost in the mud.

We are to climb and descend steep hills of 1 in 6 or 1 in 7 and make our way, one car every fifteen minutes, to 273, load up and return via the distributing hospital. In the day-time we could do the round in two hours. At night, bar accidents, it will take us three and a-half hours. I have a disc at the back of my cap that shines at night, so that when I walk to try and show my friend the road he won't run over me. At his quite reasonable suggestion I have also provided him with one.

There will certainly be shells about, more, I think, in the first four days than when the infantry attack begins. I have a theory that then the Germans won't have time to worry about the roads, and it will be exceedingly interesting to know how this and other theories will bear the test of experience.

We are all hoping to be allowed to go up in the day-time. It is infinitely pleasanter to face the dangers you can see, with the going made easy by the daylight, than to crawl at quarter speed in the dark, uncertain of the road, fearful of the traffic, and blinded by the shells.

I hear there is to be a rope left at a certain point, and a load or two of stones at another, so that we may be equal to emergencies, and a room is being provided in our village where we can stop a moment for hot coffee, and rest for a short time, when the work eases off.

So, at last, we are going to see something and do something, and we are all very content.

AUGUST 16TH.

Our hill-side might be a very charming position for a picnic in an ordinary August, but now, after ten days' rain, it has lost its novelty. The cars are pushed out and churn up the soft surface, we waddle about in two inches of greasy, sticky mud, collect pounds of it on our feet, and spread it

all over our clothes. Everything is either wet or very damp. Storm follows storm, and the thunder entirely overwhelms the noise of the guns. We have commenced a service, but the real thing hasn't yet begun.

Last night I turned in early. Comfortably warm on my stretcher enjoying a cigar, I watched through the open back of my car, the lightning and the flashes and flares of the guns illuminating the wood. The rain came down in torrents, and the vibration of the cannon kept my wooden windows in a continual tremor. An engine started on my right, and I felt thankful it wasn't my turn out. About midnight, the naval gun began again, but he was evidently in quest of something several miles beyond our range. I think he lives at Montfaucon, some eight or ten miles away. Montfaucon stands up like Mont St. Michael, and dominates all the country around. The Germans have been established there from the early days of the war.

"There isn't much left of Montzeville," was the report of the car which I had heard start out. He had been through that interesting village, and got a shell within a few yards of him. A bit of it, or a bit of something put up by the shell, had gone through the side window close to the other conductor's nose. For the rest, no damage at all. That shell was travelling, fortunately, in the same direction as the returning car.

I wish I had been taught a few very elementary accomplishments before I came out here. For example—washing clothes. In this muggy, damp weather changing a tyre produces the result of a Turkish bath. To be comfortable afterwards one must change, and I only brought up one spare set of underclothes. After serious consultation with various members of the Convoy, I have steeped my nether garments in cold water for many hours, have wrung them out with more water and Scrubb's ammonia, have rewrung them with clean cold water, and now they are hanging in the sun to dry. What will be the result? My companion tells me he has washed his things and they are much blacker, but clean!

To-day the sun is shining, the wind has changed, and the mud is drying up. Can you conceive what that means to us? I have had a sort of spring cleaning of my belongings. The sort that would horrify my people at home.

Last night, at 9.30 p.m., we started off for our post. In the darkness, but with quite a good natural light, we went up through Dombasle, through the Bethelainville Wood, on a good road, protected by artificial screens erected for a mile or so on both sides, past a long-dead horse that smelt horribly, down to Montzeville, or what is left of it. A few hundred yards further on we stopped at the cross-roads to ask our way. A wagon came



Verdun, showing the Cathedral towers.



From the Quai de la Republique.





At Jouy.



Waiting

A two-storeyed dug-out for wounded on the right.

along, and the driver directed us and warned us not to stay longer than necessary at that point, as it was unhealthy. We didn't!

It is curious how these hills and valleys break the sound. At our camp we could hear nothing. Three or four kilometres out, on the top of the Montzeville hill, the sound of the guns hit us with a shock. There were hundreds of them hard at it, and we were going into it. In the darkness every gun flash could be seen. The sharp short crack of the 75, the boom of the bigger stuff. The valley was alive with it all. Hill 304, Mort Homme, the Bois Bourru, were exchanging the most rapid of compliments. Along a narrow, badly broken road, we took the car very slowly for fear of breaking the springs. A battery or two of French guns, from a distance of 100 yards or so, fired over our heads. The hum of the engine drowned the general noise to some extent, but it was sufficiently deafening. We passed a party of soldiers working on the road, whose duty it is to fill up the shell holes as they appear. A pleasant job! I was glad to see them; their presence meant that we had nothing to fear from road caverns. But what a life! Road repairing in the dark, under shell fire! It made our work seem child's play. There they are at it all night, on the open road, keeping the way open. I wanted to get down and shake hands with them.

A kilometre more of bumps and squirms at a walking pace, and we found the post with an old friend in charge. I turned the car and waited about fifteen minutes, and while the engine was silent, had time to look round and take in the scene. I cannot describe it—just flashes, noise and whirrs. Sometimes a gun near to us made itself more conspicuous than the others. Sometimes a score or two shells together would sing through the air like a swarm of vicious wasps. Ahead of us the Bois Bourru was getting much German attention, and was at least returning as good as it received. A French soldier pointed the positions out to me. The hill crests were all ablaze, and I felt particularly glad that I was not going home by Bois Bourru.

My friend, who had not been under serious fire before, pleased me very much by the calm way he took it. The only thing he objected to was the smell of that horse. It really was rather bad.

We discharged at Clair Chene, got home at twelve, shaded the car windows, lighted a candle and had supper. It (the supper) was thoroughly enjoyable, and now to-day the sun is shining and the mud is really drying up.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another man has just joined, and now there are 45 of us. He was a little surprised at our quarters, having been told in London that we were always billeted in a village. (That fiction still exists with the Committee :

as a matter of fact we are never billeted.) Fortunately a car is going into Bar to-day, and will bring out some of the things he would himself have brought had he known better.

The heavens are very interesting here. Planes—many hundreds of them. I saw a new one yesterday, with tremendous power. It rose rapidly in short spirals, and then bolted off over the German lines at twice the speed of the usual machine. From the edge of a wood last night I counted nineteen French sausages and nine German.

AUGUST 19TH.

We are told the infantry attack begins at 4 a.m. to-morrow, and all our cars must be in readiness at 6 o'clock.

Great excitement! A Boche plane has just been brought down by anti-aircraft fire. The first I have seen fall, and I have watched many thousands. The plane must have been winged. She turned over and over, not falling very quickly, and hitting the ground a mile or two away from us. We all turned out and cheered. A lucky shot brought the plane down from 16,500 feet. The observer was killed, the pilot uninjured.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was all worked out beautifully. The attack was to begin at 4 a.m. Our cars were to go out at fifteen minute intervals, controlled at certain points on the roads to 272 and 232. Hot coffee would be found at so-and-so. So I turned in at 9.30 half undressed. But of course the Boche interfered with our plans. He launched a gas attack an hour or two before, and at 2 a.m. the call came "All cars to turn out." We could smell the gas at our camp. The night was fine, and the light good, but the dust extreme. I reached 272 about 3.30, and stayed there some time. The noise of the French guns was terrific. For nearly an hour we waited and watched, and during the whole time I was never conscious of a single German shell. This was as I imagined it would be. The enemy were too busy preparing to counter the coming infantry attack to spare any attention beyond the front trenches. As 4.40 arrived, the exact time of the advance, many Frenchmen around us left their shelters and climbed on to the nearest mound looking in the direction of 304, and Mort Homme. The daylight had come, and there was little to see, though much to hear. We got four slightly wounded Frenchmen, and went off to 272 to fill up. There we heard that the affair already promised to be a success. With ten cases inside and one on the box, we crawled slowly back. As we approached the French battery that is so very near the road, I saw the flame of one gun shoot right across our track. We waited till it had fired again, then tried to rush past, but

just as we got in front, off the gun went. I put my head back, and the only damage done was the destruction of our two talc windows by the concussion. In the daytime, one of the gunners puts his hand up when he is to fire that piece. He may do the same at night, but we cannot see him. During that time there was a smell of gas about, and some of the cases I took down were "intoxice," but it was not bad enough to worry us. We preferred it to the dead horses.

About 7 a.m. I got back to camp for some hot coffee and tyre repairs. We had to change two on the road that night. Then off again, and so on for ten to twelve hours on end. At the clearing hospital we found half way through the day a congestion of loaded cars. Our French officer took the matter in hand at once, and we unloaded the wounded ourselves and hurried back to the front where we were wanted. Why the French hospital arrangements should always in an emergency break down I don't know, but so it is. Twenty or thirty full cars waiting at the base for an hour when all the Postes de Secours were crying out for them. Later on Clair Chene became merely a calling place, and we were sent on long distances inland before we could be free. The nearest American ambulance, S.S.O. 18, turned out and helped us splendidly.

Home at 4 p.m., exceedingly dirty, hungry, and very tired. We cleaned out the car, attended to the engine. I put out my bed so that I could sleep in the open, and, at 8 p.m., minus only my boots, leggings, and coat, "turned in" to watch the stars and listen to the hum of a German bomb-dropping plane that the French searchlights were vainly looking for.

At the end of two and a half hours I was awakened by my friend with "We are going out." In a few minutes we were ploughing through the dust again. We reported at Bezonville and made our way to 232. Half-way there we were held up by an ammunition convoy close behind a big battery. The battery was firing heavy shells without a pause. We were alternately blinded and deafened. I looked at the shells: they were 10 inch. It was a heavy howitzer, and made a devil of a noise. All round, the ground was ploughed up with huge holes. It must be a warm corner that occasionally. There were fireworks of all kinds besides the guns. German searchlights, looking in their turn for French planes, rocquets, clusters of balls of fires, flares and big crimson illuminations like a glimpse of the coming dawn. It was very interesting. Home at 1,30 and sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

In one of our daylight runs the Germans began dropping shrapnel and high explosives on the road two hundred yards in front of us, and about the same distance short of the Post. We were on our way up with an empty



car; I pulled up and looked on. An American Ford came through it, obviously in a hurry, and we stopped him and asked him (1) what it was like, (2) if there were any wounded waiting for us. To question number one he said he didn't want to go that way again just then; to number two, "Yes." We watched the practice for two or three minutes, then, seeing that very few shells actually hit the road, we started. We couldn't go fast, the road was too bad. We got through all right. The only thing that nearly hit us was at the Post itself, when we were turning round: a shell exploded within eight or nine yards in the far ditch, which fortunately smothered it. Nobody hurt. I saw our Medicine Principal, with a wounded arm, get into a Ford and start off across country to 272. He is now in hospital. In five minutes, quite interesting minutes, we were called for and told we could go, if we chose, with two *couches*, one a commandant. "All right," we said, "if they don't mind, we don't." We scuttled through again, watching with great amusement a crowd of German prisoners running for all they were worth to get out of the track of their own shells. Now it is safely over I can say it was quite a jolly half-hour.

The cage here has been full of prisoners half a dozen times. Twelve or fifteen hundred have passed through it, and there are many more cages around. I have seen several columns of these men marching back to the rear. The impression they gave me was that they were very glad to be taken prisoners, and that they were not by any means starved, though many of them were decidedly immature.

The plane that was wandering around succeeded in damaging the hospital sheds at Vadelaincourt, some six or seven miles to our rear. About twenty were killed. It is thus that the gentle German teaches us to love him.

AUGUST 22ND.

\* Five thousand prisoners up to date, and more coming in, and the French have advanced about a mile and a half and are established in exceedingly important positions in a semi-circle of 18 kilometres around Verdun. No wonder they are all smiling and pleased, for this success, which is of great importance, has been achieved at a very small cost.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was out all last night driving through clouds of dust. The artillery fire had died down, and there were no fireworks. To-night I am to be allowed to sleep, and I need it.

The artillery work in this action has been perfect. The French put a barrage of big guns on to the first position to be taken. As the infantry approached, this barrage was moved up to the next objective, and no less

than three curtains of 75's were turned on in front of the troops creeping forward at 30 metres a minute. It went like clockwork, and if there was any mistake it was due to some of the excited infantry advancing too quickly and getting under the fire of their own guns. The German prisoners state that the drum fire was overwhelming, and that they could do nothing.

One division went forward splendidly and suffered very little, most of their casualties being slight wounds. Their task was the taking of Mort Homme, and they not only captured the two peaks, but went about two kilometres beyond it.

The Germans dropped a message saying that they knew all about the coming attack, and were quite prepared for it. If this were so they made an exceedingly bad response. They lost, in a few hours, all their valuable positions around Verdun. The impregnable Mort Homme, with its Crown Prince and Bismarck tunnels, its elaborate electric light and pumping machinery, and its numerous comfortable chambers, the Cumiere Wood, Cote de Talu, and a score of other points, have returned to the French. The whole of 304 has yet to be taken, but it is only a matter of a few hours. Now the German is angry and is hating everything. His planes are dropping shells on hospitals and his guns shelling the whole earth indiscriminately. If it gratifies him to plough up the fields and waste ammunition by shooting into space, well and good. If he thinks he will end the war by killing a fair proportion of his own wounded in hospitals, one must remember that he is, after all, a German.

\* \* \* \* \*

How does this affair compare with my first Verdun experience? The work has been infinitely easier and pleasanter. The main advantage lies in the weather. Now the days are long and the nights fine. It was never really dark, and we have no bad mud. In February, 1916, one could not see an ammunition column, a stranded wagon, or a dead horse, unless he were within three yards of it. Every moment you had to be at acute attention to stop at once. If you turned off the narrow road you were in the mud, and could not get out without assistance. There was no organization, everything was chaos, our own administration was bad, there was everywhere excitement, much gesticulation, bad temper, and noise. What a difference! This affair has been very pleasant and enjoyable, successful and well managed. We are exceedingly happy in our French officer. He is keen and able, ready to solve any problem as it comes along, and takes a pride in S.S.A. 10, and knows much better than the hospital authorities how it should be run, and is not afraid to say so. We should

like to do this sort of work permanently. It is exceedingly interesting, and there is just enough danger in it to make it at times very exciting. The work behind the lines is necessary, but it is very dull. Could we not be kept for these affairs, and the work of clearing hospitals, etc., be left to new convoys who have just joined and are unable to distinguish between the bang of a French gun and the noise of a bursting Boche shell?

\* \* \* \* \*

My last day up at 232 became interesting in the afternoon, when the rain cleared and the sun broke through. I was writing outside 232. The German guns began pitching black stuff and shrapnel around our post. Starting in the valley two hundred yards away, they gradually crept up to us. After watching the result for an hour or so and retrieving a fragment of high explosive from the top of the car, and noting with pleasure a shrapnel dent in a front mudguard, a shell dropped on top of a shelter close to us and set up a fire, whereupon we were promptly ordered below. An hour later we crept up again, expecting to find the car in bits. It was all right, and in a few minutes we started homewards. I was very glad it was daylight. The road had been hit a score of times, and in the soft muddy weather the shells had torn up many deep little holes, which meant for us broken springs, if not something worse. The car slowly crawled back twisting and skidding. In front of us was Montzeville, with shells dropping amid its ruins at about three a minute. Our way led through the village, and it didn't look healthy. But I think the shelling must have stopped when we got there. In any case I didn't hear any, my attention being wholly given to the task of getting the car through as quickly as possible. We had the new Medicine Chef on board, and, very wisely, he did not want to do any sight-seeing just then.

The next day (September 1st) we started for the peaceful repose of the delightful grounds of the little chateau at Savonniere, and now we are, thanks to the kindness of General MacMahon, settled there. Our clean clothes have been unpacked, our boots and buttons polished. We are washed and clean, waiting for orders, far from the radius of whistling Rufus, and so far undisturbed at night by bomb-dropping planes.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is no doubt about the brilliant success of the Verdun attack. Bar-le-Duc, I hear, was warned to expect 30,000 wounded. It received only

8,000, and the great majority of those were slight cases. The Germans say they voluntarily abandoned the positions. They expected the attack. General Von Dietrich issued, on August 17th, the order:—

“ You must expect to be attacked at any moment.  
The division must count only on its own resources. I  
hope that it will be self-sufficient, and that it will beat  
the enemy.”

The Germans knew the value of their outlying heights around Verdun. Had they not spent 600,000 men in capturing them in 1916? “ If,” said the General commanding a German division, “ the French ever take hill 304, we are more than half lost, and if they once become masters of it, nothing prevents them from attacking in whatever position they choose.” Yet the French infantry, protected by the threefold barrage of their guns, marched up that hill with their rifles at the trail. All the positions were taken, over 8,000 prisoners, and 29 guns. No wonder the French are pleased !

\* \* \* \* \*

SEPTEMBER 3RD.

It is now a question as to whether we leave our Division and do hum-drum hospital work, or follow it to another sector and do our little bit in another push. We are making every endeavour to be allowed to go with the Division, and as all the authorities are pleased with us, there is a fair chance of our succeeding.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Division has gone—but into repose—and we are left at Savonniere doing nothing—for how long ?

\* \* \* \* \*

The usual complimentary messages have come through from the Army authorities.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### A BIRTHDAY PARTY.

SEPTEMBER 4TH was my birthday. I said I was 39, but alas ! Anyhow my good friend gave me a dinner at Bar. The evening proved interesting. There were five of us. After an enjoyable hour and a half at the café we stepped forth into the moonlight to walk home when the siren began to sing of German planes. We stopped in the middle of the square to wait and see. In a few seconds the bombs began to fall in front and behind us. Then a bright red light sprang up to our left, and we went to investigate.



On the other side of the river a motor repairing shed was blazing. By the light we saw on our bank the ruins of a café, which had collapsed like a pack of cards. There we were wanted, and we set to work to help the French soldiers to remove the debris and get at the voices we heard moaning below. In that fitful lurid light it was a weird business trying to move heavy masonry—great stones that required three or four men to shift—wondering all the time whether the rest of the building would collapse. A dead soldier lay outside on the pavement. In a few minutes we unearthed another. Two workers deposited a heavy boulder on one of my companions, and I saw him collapse and then get up and limp away. I found myself trying to balance a heavy paving stone that threatened to fall my side and flatten me. Two Frenchmen came to my assistance, and I took the lamp. A friend helped to pull out a mass of towelled hair, dust, mortar, and blood, that turned out to be a soldier, only one quarter dead. With his face streaming with blood, looking a mass of broken bones, he made us smile approval with his cry, “Vive la France, à bas les Boches,” as they conveyed him to the ambulance. A dead woman was then dug out, and there were no more. The fire gradually died down. A staff car, with a Lieutenant-Colonel, drove up with its lights shining on the wreck. I got our bruised and rather dishevelled five together, and proposed to get back home. We left the town just in time. A second lot of planes came along a few minutes later, broke many windows, and did some material damage on the road, but hurt nobody. When we got to our quarters there was nothing more serious to be done than a great deal of cleaning and bandaging.

That scene amid the ruins impressed me greatly. It was weird. The wonderful soldier, his face streaming with blood, his limbs hanging broken in a dozen places. “Vive la France, à bas les Boches!” The true spirit of the glorious second army of Verdun, forgetful of self, fighting with single purpose, and whole-heartedly for France.

\* \* \* \* \*

The following night the planes came again. First the siren. All lights out. Then the buzz of the aeroplane engines. A searchlight, unable to distinguish anything in the clear moonlight. Anti-aircraft guns in plenty firing into vacancy. Then suddenly, bang, bang, bang—a few minutes' comparative silence, and then another plane, more guns, and more bangs. So on, for an hour and a half, with the occasional tattoo of a mitrailleuse. There seems to be no real antidote to midnight bomb-dropping planes. Fortunately the bombs, though they make a great deal of noise and are very disturbing to one's slumbers, do generally very little harm. It is, in fact, pure bad luck when they hit anything. Last night, for example, from a

distance of two miles, I heard and saw the flash of seven of them. It sounded and looked very terrible. To-day I visited the place. One building had collapsed, three great holes in the hospital grounds, any number of broken windows, but no lives lost. To-night, probably, we shall sleep in peace, as the clouds and the rain have come. Midnight bomb-dropping on towns is one of the beastly things of modern war. The only thing to do is to clear the civilian population out at once, and build shelters for the soldiers. It is to be hoped the Germans are getting or will get something of what they are trying to give the French. If they are, they won't like it, I imagine.

Yes, it was a good birthday, for later on I got the Brigade Order of the same date, which gave to both my friend and me our Croix of the Service de Sante of the Army Corps; now I hear that the Convoy itself has been cited in Army Orders, an honour bestowed on no other British Convoy out here, and held by one only of the numerous American Sanitaire units.

\* \* \* \* \*

We did nothing for a month. The General of the 2nd Army came down and gave us our Army Citation:—

Le Général Commandant la 2ieme Armée.

Section Sanitaire Anglaise No. 10, sous le commandement du sous Lieut. Klingelhofer a assuré depuis un an et demi les evacuations dans les secteurs difficiles de la maniere la plus remarquable. Les conducteurs, pour la plupart agés et liberés de tout obligation militaire, viennent au cours d'une attaque récente de faire l'admiration de tous en parcourant en plain jours des zones violemment bombardées par l'ennemi et en assurant les evacuations avec une rapidité non obtenu jusqu'a ce jour.

Which being translated reads:—

Section Sanitaire No. 10, under the command of 2nd Lieut. Klingelhofer, has, for the last year and a half, carried out the evacuations in difficult sectors in the most efficient manner. The drivers of the section, for the most part men of mature age, and free from any military obligation, have, in the course of a recent attack, gained the admiration of all by carrying on their work in full daylight in zones under violent bombardment by the enemy, and in effecting the evacuation with a rapidity never hitherto attained.

No wonder we were pleased. We could hardly have wished for higher praise.

Two days later, General MacMahon, Duke of Magenta, son of the famous Marshall of the 1870 war, added to our obligations to him by kindly presenting us with our Croix, and making an excellent speech on the value of the Flanders offensive.

We shall all have ever happy memories of the delightful little park at Savonniere, and of the kindly, genial French General who showed his English sympathies in so charming a manner. It was good to have earned a Croix de Guerre; it was delightful to have it pinned on one's breast by General MacMahon.

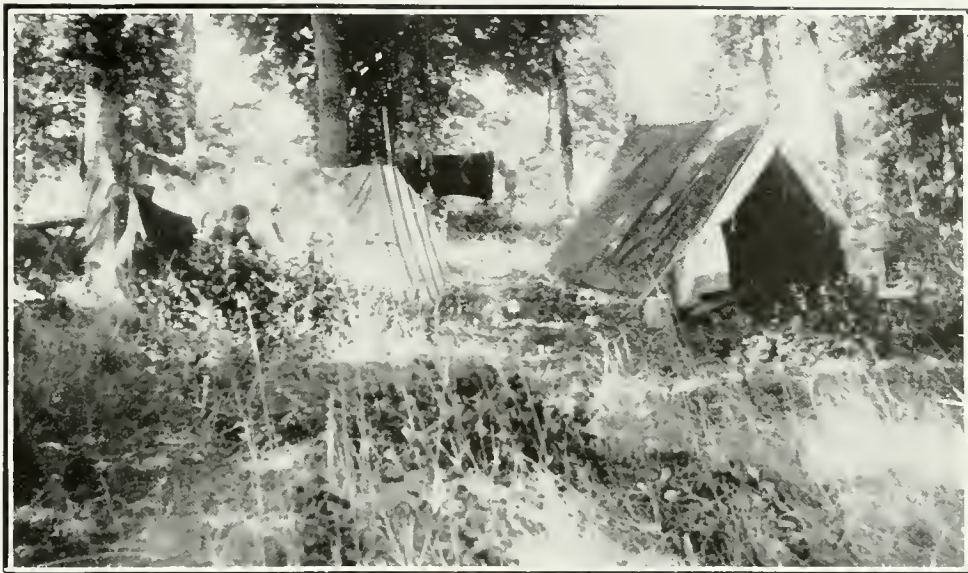
I left the Convoy in October, 1917, for the winter. Perhaps before the winter closes the war will end. Who knows? 'Tis time, and yet the work must go on till it is completed. We are in this great struggle to win at any cost. The fight is that of Civilisation, of all that makes life worth living, against the Prussian creed of "Might is Right." The supremacy of the Hun in Europe is unthinkable. Thanks to the Prussian onslaught the British Empire has been welded together as the greatest power the world has ever seen. France is fighting magnificently. In a few months the United States will throw her weight into the scales. The result cannot be in doubt. Germany sees herself economically ruined, and her military caste is now striving desperately to redeem itself and to avert the terrible punishment that the inevitable revolution after the war will bring. A little patience, and the four years' agony will produce its reward.

## SAVONNIERE.

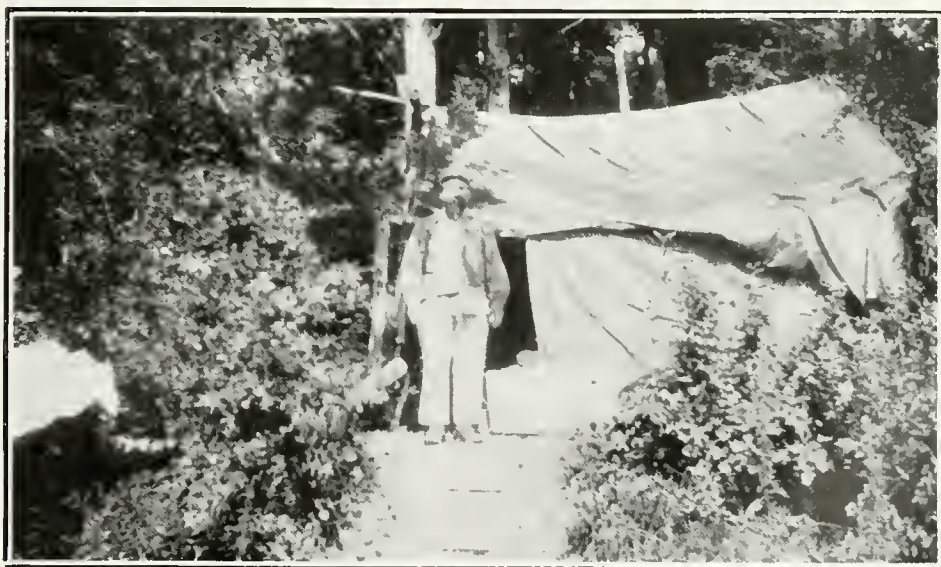
(By E. F. KING.)

At Savonniere day followed day, week followed week, and it seemed at times as if months might be added to the sequence. Boredom reigned everywhere, and it taxed each man's ingenuity to fill in the hours. Fortunately, fine weather prevailed, enabling all to enjoy sun baths in the grounds, and at times tempting some of the more hardy to dip in the little stream. Sports were initiated, starting with a walking handicap twice round the grounds (1,200 metres) for the English first, and afterwards with a purse put up for the French.

The fine weather of late September and early October synchronised with a full moon, and in consequence our slumbers for a few nights were far from peaceful, as friend Fritz started his night visits to the adjoining town, doing considerable damage by means of incendiary bombs to two large blocks of buildings, with some loss of life. About October 6th, the weather changed, and with it the attentions of the Hun. The autumn rains



Home-made tents at Jouy.



For tyres, petrol, etc.





Our cars covered with green branches



'Twas summer time.



Tea—en repos.



Hill-Trevor camouflaging his car.

fell with steady persistency, and soon our little river showed a strong inclination to break out of bounds. The tent dwellers had to vacate their quarters precipitately. The waters rose far into the Park grounds. Over the little footbridge it roared in a surging torrent, collecting against its weir fallen trees and branches, and threatening thereby its complete destruction. Volunteers were called for, to wade in and rescue the structure. By means of a long tow rope and many willing helpers, the fallen timbers were removed from the dam they were forming against the bridge, when the effect soon became apparent in the flood subsiding.

As to our future movements, hope and rumour alternately buoyed us up and left us in despair. First we were to be attached to this Division, then to that, always, however, to be disappointed.

We watched, with envious eyes, troops move off, but never abandoned hope whilst the R.V.F. camions remained parked outside our walls. With the departure of these lorries and no order for ourselves, our last hopes went, for now we were the only foreign occupants of the little village—abandoned, forgotten, we accepted our fate with resignation. A surprise was in store, however, as on October 24th, orders came for us to go somewhere Verdun way on the 26th, to relieve another section. Activity prevailed. All was bustle and excitement in loading cars, and getting ready to be off early on that morning. On the 25th, the French Lieutenant and our leader went up to reconnoitre, and brought back the news of the sector we were to work. On the 26th, at 7.30 a.m., the first eight cars got off, the other cars following some three hours later. The route taken was once more up the Verdun road as far as Souilly, and there turning off via Dugny to Handainville, where we were to be quartered.

The start was not propitious, as not long after we found the car towing the kitchen with its engine seized through lack of oil, and further on, first two brothers looking disconsolately at their smashed radiator, through butting into the rear of another car, and then another car in a similar plight some five kilometres further on. Ichabod! They were left on the road to make shift for themselves, as we could not afford to wait. Orders were to have cars ready to take over the service at 2.0 o'clock that afternoon. Six cars arrived soon after 11.0 o'clock at Handainville, and commenced to discharge.

We found about eight rooms allotted to us for living quarters, in cottages, in quite fair condition. A few doors and windows were missing, but this proved no drawback in view of four or five men having to sleep in each room. For a mess room we had the lower portion of an old barn. The village had not been knocked about unduly, a few houses showing signs of Hun attention, some of which we heard had been quite recent.

## THE RIGHT BANK OF THE MEUSE.

Our service consisted of an alternate twenty-four hours' duty with six cars at Carriere Nord (Haudromont) and a daily supplemental duty with two cars for Carriere Sud (beyond Douaumont). The evacuation would be to a large hospital at Beaulieu, not far distant from our quarters. An American section quartered at Belrupt shared our work at the Nord, and another American section, stationed alongside us, took the greater part of the work at the Sud. The road for the two services lay the same way for some six or seven kilometres, out past Porte Victor at Verdun, across the Etain main road, up to Citerne Marceau. How one's memories were carried back to previous visits to the glorious city. To those who shared its fortunes in February and March, 1916, across the valley there lay Tavannes, and there Ferme Bellevue, here the road we came down by, but how different now everything. Gone the din, chaos, and all the indescribable tumult of those critical days. Gone the daring Hun airman, mysteriously signalling to and producing the whistling, earsplitting crash of his shells. Gone from her close suburbs all signs of the peril the fair city of Verdun then lay exposed to. Well-kept roads, but little used, troops scarcely visible, wayward shells never heard, all so tranquil, gave proof of the changed state of affairs. To those who paid their second visit to Verdun in August, 1916, how vividly the memory of those days and nights was recalled. Between these two dates the Hun had made incessant and furious assaults on the city. His line had been advanced nearer and nearer to her gates, at some points by many kilometres. The French batteries had been drawn back nearly to the walls of the city itself, and but a narrow range of hills then formed her last barrier. It was then that the moment of her greatest anguish had arrived. She lay almost beaten, under the last mighty and superhuman effort of her foes. It was then that the flood of invasion reached its furthest line, for the French poilus had said "Thus far and no further." Here was the Porte Chaussee and bridge over which we came and went, here the poste de secours in the Fanbourg Parc, not at all too healthy just then, and here the road that twisted and turned up past Belleville and beyond to Bras. Gone all the terrific din of the French guns, firing from almost literally every street corner; gone the incessant answering Boche shell; gone the hurrying convoys of guns and munitions and ravataillement; and gone for good that blinding, smothering, overwhelming dust that obliterated everything and everyone, leaving one paralysed and helpless in its midst. It was only when one recalled all these incidents of the past and observed how far distant all the guns and firing were now that one realised how much ground the French had recovered and how vain and futile must any fresh Hun efforts be to achieve their object in this direction.



Beyond Citerne Marceau, where two cars waited each day to help the American Section working Carriere Sud, the road went up past Fort Souville lying unused to the right, then past Fleury, or what was once the little village of that name, and of which no vestige or trace whatever now remains; then down the other side around "Piccadilly Circus," up and past grim Douaumont on the left, out into the open, where they said Fritz could see us, and where it was certainly very unhealthy, with badly broken roads, a slight descent, and after an awkward turn in, or rather back down, our destination, Alsace, an old quarry, is reached. Fritz had marked this spot fairly well, and it was never wise to linger too long outside the shelter, or to take any pleasant walks in the vicinity. At first our cars went up to the Sud day and night, whenever the call came for a car, but the road proved to be so narrow at places, and often so badly holed, that the service for our cars eventually became one for daylight only. Americans also waited at Marceau with their wonderful little Fords, and they undertook the night service, with very often one of our men beside the driver as aide. An Englishman had a nasty spill in one of these one night, being ejected from his seat with the driver, whilst there were three stretcher cases on board. On dit that the car turned a complete somersault in the hole, but whatever happened the little marvel came along by itself afterwards, whereas a C.M.G. would have rested there quite hors de combat. What an ideal convoy it would make to have 12 Fords and 12 C.M.G. cars for work of different conditions. For the Carriere Nord we had six cars on duty on alternate days with another American section. The official road was up beyond Marceau, over the top, down into a ravine, a long climb up past Thiaumont, and down into another ravine; then a sharp turn and a steep ascent to the quarry.

Our energetic Lieutenant and English skipper, however, as usual, found another route up the Bras road, past Belleville, and then turning sharp right, just before reaching the post de secours, that we evacuated from in August last. Here we again made acquaintance with the Belleville quarry and suburb, with its shattered houses, with the little motor tramway at the top cross-roads, and with the cactus like "Bras trac." This road saved much contour work, and actual distance, and joined up at the bottom of the Thiaumont slope. There were a few unhealthy spots on this road, up beyond Thiaumont, and at the last turn into the quarry. Ask two of our drivers for verification of this latter position. They had one day all too close an acquaintance with four big ones during the last 200 inches. Nothing hit them except stones and mud, but for long these holes stood there as living witnesses to what must have been a noisy and tres mauvais cinq minutes.

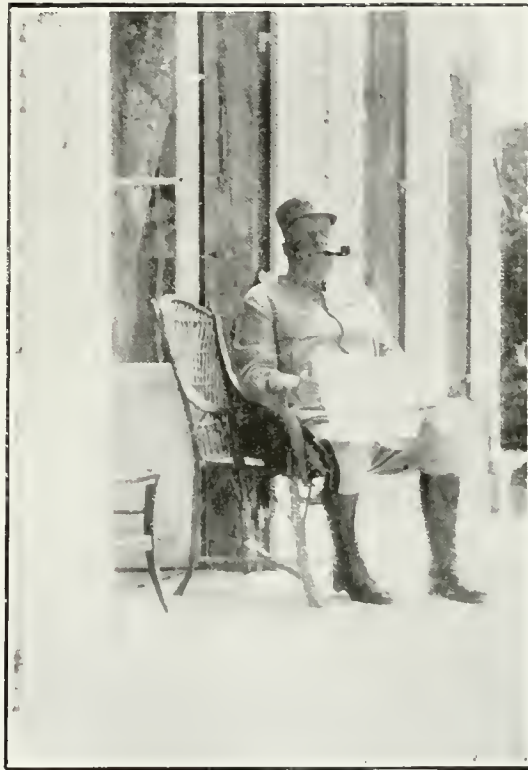


No attack on either side of any moment took place during our visit, but the wastage of war was very apparent in the continuous use of our cars for generally well over 100 cases for the twenty-four hours. The ground over which we worked one could only view with a certain amount of reverence, for it was on these heights for now over three years that the contest has raged backwards and forwards, until the very formation of the ground appeared to be changed. Where marked on the map is "woods" nothing is visible except ground upheaved again and again over every inch, with scarce a stump a foot high to denote what was once some majestic beech or oak. One or two cars received a few punctures from shrapnel pieces, but the convoy's proverbial good luck held. Sickness knocked out one or two, but the service went through smoothly and efficiently, rewarded eventually by five Croix de Guerre for the English and two for the French. Rumour soon got busy as to when our Division was coming out, but not until the 13th November did we receive orders to quit on the 15th. Cars were once more packed, billets cleaned out, and at 8.15 on the morning of the 15th, the convoy started off for Vitry le Port some 80 kilometres distant.

We were a goodly array of some 26 cars, with only one left behind, for lack of a rear wheel.

The Convoy travelled well, and entered Vitry soon after 1 p.m. Here we found a clean and peaceful little village, fully occupied and apparently prosperous. Cars were now overhauled, and the long-delayed permissionnaires began to get anxious as to their papers. A big exodus took place a few mornings later, some ten being seen off, some on leave and others on termination of their contracts. A pleasant ramassage in two directions provided a little occupation for some of the men, but otherwise dulness prevailed. The days were short and nights were long, and the adjoining town of Vitry le Francois was both too far and too much out of bounds to provide a rendezvous.

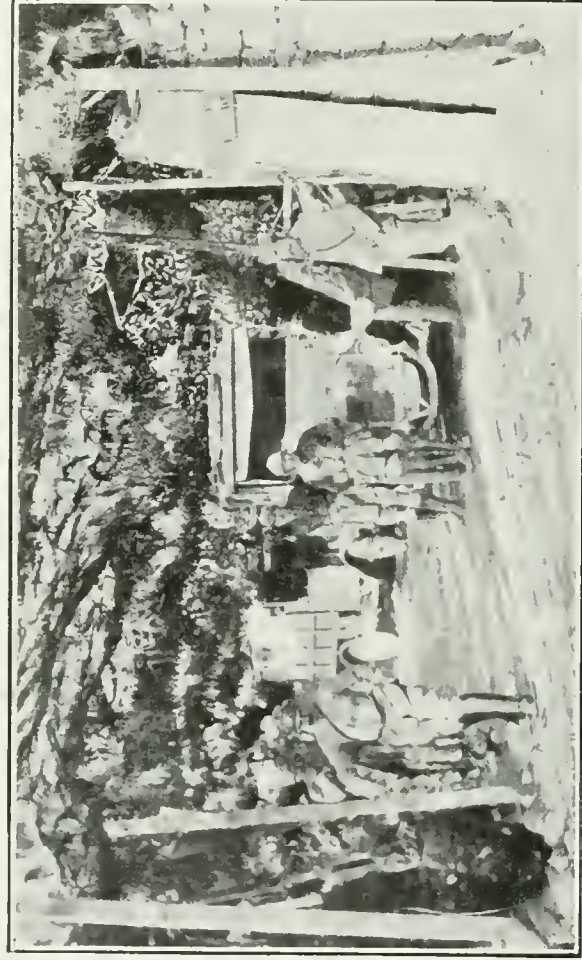
We were not too long au repos, however, as we moved up once more on Saturday, December 8th, to Grange aux Bois, to work Chalade and Sept Fontaines, or rather a post a little nearer (Chardon), as the other had been abandoned. Once more we were brought in touch with old familiar surroundings, as in June and July, 1916, and September to December, 1916, we worked these sectors. Nothing of interest occurred, except that on December 13th we said Adieu to Skipper King, who had been with the convoy since July, 1916, and A. A. Hannay reigned in his stead.



General MacMahon, Duke of Magenta.



Croix de Guerre at Savonnière.



**A shell-proof shelter recovered from the Boche.**

Carriere Nord, one of our posts on the right bank of the Meuse. This shelter, built by the Germans and captured by the French, is extremely well-built and impervious to shell fire. It was hewn out of the solid rock.

## MEMBERS OF THE CONVOY—PAST AND PRESENT.

† Croix de Guerre.

Abbott, W. F.	Fairburn, Wm.	Kenney, L. F.
Atkinson, G.	Forsdike, G. F.	†King, E. F.
Barton, B. H.	Fraser, F. B.	Knight, F. A.
Baxter, W. E. E.	German, B.	†Leng, Wm. St. Q.
Box, H. T.	†Hartley, C. A.	†Linsell, W. D.
†Bower, J.	†Hyde, E.	McNeill, A.
Buchanan, M. T.	Hughes, F.	Muir, W. E.
†Burton, S.	Hutchinson, H. E.	Milburn, W. G.
Briggs, Bury S.	Hacking, E. H.	†Oliver, D. L.
†Breakey, C. C.	Hamilton, J. A. K.	Page, F. V.
Branston, R.	†Hannay, A. A.	†Partridge, F. S.
Brown, W.	Harker, Wm.	Sauer, H. N.
†Castle, M.	Hart-Smith, G. M. C.	Southcombe, S.
Clements, N. C.	†Hill-Trevor, C. E.	Stephens, W. F.
Clements, L.	Hoffman, E.	Strong, H. W.
Clark, J. Pain	Impey, L. A.	Spring-Rice, B.
Clarke, L. G.	Innes-Taylor	Tregonning, J. S.
Daglish, W. A.	Irvine, L.	†Turner, F. H.
†Davidson, H. McG.	Jerome, J. K.	Waller, H.
†Davy, C. B.	Jackson, F. A.	Wells, H.
Finch, H. K.	Kay, E. H.	Workman, E.
Finch, Vere		







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